

ANATOLE FRANCE ABROAD:

•  
JEAN JACQUES BROUSSON



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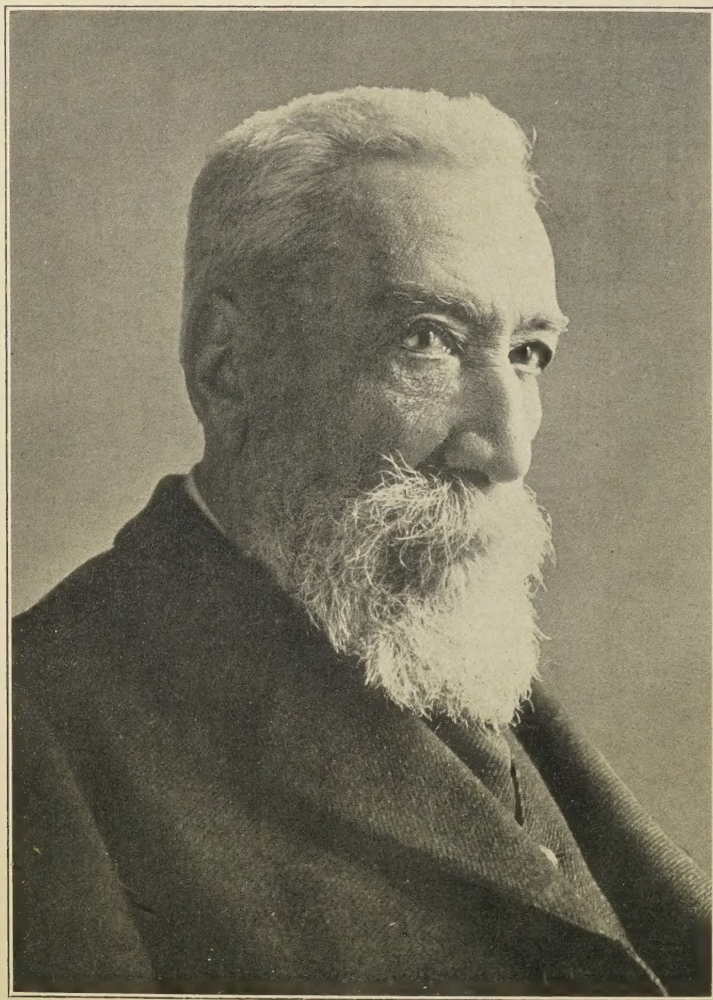
ANATOLE FRANCE  
ABROAD

*By the same Author*

ANATOLE FRANCE HIMSELF







*Henri Manuel, Paris.*

ANATOLE FRANCE

# ANATOLE FRANCE ABROAD

BY  
JEAN JACQUES BROUSSON

TRANSLATED BY  
JOHN POLLOCK



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The living have a right  
to respect : the dead but  
to the truth.

VOLTAIRE.



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## EUSAPIA PALADINO

**A** SPIRITUALIST séance at Madame's house in the Avenue Hoche with the famous medium Eusapia Paladino. There are some sixty guests. Amid the multicoloured riot of flimsy frocks the Abbé M——'s soutane makes a dark splash as it were of a cockchafer's wings. Since the conversion of Huysmans, the Abbé M—— is the most-sought-after of all father confessors. He has an almost magic pass of the hand to soften hardened hearts. But he only operates in the highest literary or aristocratic circles. If the strayed sheep lacks armorial bearings or the glory of the Academy, the abbé will snap his fingers at him. At least, this is what Anatole France declares.

"Our abbé," he explains, "rolls the Gospel and the catechism into chocolate bonbons. For him religion is not a mortification of the flesh, but a sweetie. He wanted me to suck one: pleasant to the palate, but affording no support for the inner man. With the homily—I should say, with the soap, for he has a trick of rubbing his hands that recalls a washerwoman—you lap up everything: the Holy Trinity, and the Real Presence, and the consubstantiation of the Son with the Father. But once our abbé has floated off with his gospel soap-bubbles, you are left just the same Tom, Dick or Harry you were before!"

The experiments on this occasion are of the usual commonplace spectacular kind, no better than those of

thought-readers at country entertainments. Madame's voice is heard, demanding a prominent place for the abbé, close to the sibyl. Can't be that she wants to compromise him ?

"Sit here, saintly man, in this armchair. Eusapia Paladino is completely at home in the other world. One word from her and the spirits obey. Yes, yes, my dear abbé, I assure you : Eusapia is of your fraternity."

His hands joined over his silken sash, his eyes half closed, and breathing with a touch of cant, the priest ruminates unknown things. Maybe some theological argument. Maybe Madame's luncheon, which was distinctly heating.

Now we are attempting levitation, but the prophetess complains of the light. "The spirits do not like electricity. It is too brutal, too modern !" Candelabra are fetched with rather unsteady candles, and the room begins to look like a chapel. Anatole France whispers to a fair neighbour : "The greatest miracles are done in the dark—the miracles of love."

Madame's keen ear has caught the murmur.

"Come here, Monsieur France," she commands. "You can see nothing from there ; and I have got up the séance wholly for your benefit."

A bowl of Venetian glass has been placed on a stand. The medium seems intoxicated with the rays that emanate from herself. Ceaselessly she places her feverish hands on her boiling, heavily tressed head, whence they descend again slowly, full of spirit fluid, towards the bowl. She holds them aloft, on a level with it : she moves them forward—the vase slides along ; backwards—it follows gently over the marble surface. One lady faints. Salts are fetched, the electric light turned on, and she is revived. Tea and cake is served. Anatole France profits by the crush to slip out of his place. The triumphant sibyl

receives congratulations. One fervent lady, her mouth full of meringue cream, asks France if he believes in eternity.

"Why not ask the abbé that, you charming creature? Eternity is his province."

But the abbé is absorbed in cakes and sandwiches. First one, then the other.

"When people asked Kant about eternity," pursues France, "that serious-minded man knew how to take the gulf in his stride. He would say: 'I have one foot in eternity, the other here. I am like the angel in the Koran whose eyebrows were eight hundred leagues apart.'"

Fat S—— buzzes, like a mayfly against the window:

"There's a trick in it! There's a trick! You saw how Eusapia touches her hair all the time with her hands—and goodness knows her hair is thick enough!"

"Horsehair almost. Perhaps it's a wig?"

"She tears out one of her hairs, and with the aid of that she moves the vase about in the darkness. What could be simpler? Look here, if I had hair enough I could do the same. You don't have to invoke God to do that, nor the devil either."

Anatole France takes up the cudgels for Eusapia.

"You want to know her secret? Ah, it's not everyone who owns it. It is—virginity."

There is a general laugh.

"Then you believe that Eusapia is a maid, Master?"

"I would go to the stake for it after seeing such miracles. The fathers of the church are with me. For instance, that great saint Jerome puts complete faith in the sibyls and in their infallibility. If we may believe him the gift of prophecy was accorded them as a recompense for their perfect virtue. And prophecy or levitation, you know——!"



"But the coming of Jesus silenced the oracles."

"It did not silence the women. And we still have virgins among us, though we have forgotten how to make use of them."

"How is that, Master?"

"Why, certainly! You have lost something—a manuscript, or your spectacles, or your purse. Your patience quite at an end. What are you to do?"

"Apply to the lost-property office, or to the police, or to St. Anthony of Padua."

"In fact, you would do like everybody else. You don't know the right recipe. Why do you not have recourse to a virgin? She must be spotless as ermine or the lily. She will strip herself naked and she will go wherever her virginal instinct moves her, repeating the formula: *Negat Apollo*. In a twinkling she will have spotted the pea—that's to say, she will have found manuscript, keys, spectacles or what not. I found the receipt in a mediæval manuscript."

"And have you made practical use of it?"

"No, but I put it into my *Joan of Arc*. Because she was a Maid, my shepherdess was blessed with the same power. She found the sword of Fierbois, the keys of the town of Champagne, and the trappings for the coronation."

"And what does the abbé think of the matter?" asks Madame in sugary tones.

The question is insidious. The church as a matter of fact forbids ecclesiastics to take part in séances of this kind. What will he answer? If he approves, he runs counter to orthodoxy. If he reproves, he reproves his hostess. The abbé finishes his sandwich with a pious air. He stirs his sugar lengthily, then wipes his lips with a sly smile. He stretches himself as a cat might after a night on the tiles.

" My opinion of these experiments ? Alas, dear lady, I must confess that the only supernatural thing I have seen here to-day is this " ; and he waves his hand towards an eighteenth-century terra-cotta Bacchante on a console.

From the drapery of the bust emerges a vigorous breast like a flood of voluptuousness. And he repeats :

" Ah, that is supernatural ! That is divine ! But that, and only that ! "

" Ah, ah, Madame ! " chuckles France. " That's how holy Mother Church wipes our noses ! "

\* \* \* \* \*

### MADAME VIRGINIE

Anatole France has a whole chaplet of antiquity and curiosity shops, and second-hand booksellers where we go browsing every morning on the way to Madame's. He has added to them a tiny little shop nearly at the top of the Avenue de la Grande Armée, where its window is jammed, like a Norman clock, between a pastrycook's and a café, almost in the epic shade of the Arc de Triomphe, with its door askew. The window, as we stand to study it, is full of the oddest things : pink chemises, and underwear mauve, blue, and cream coloured, puffed and flowered garters, beribboned scent-bottles—very little scent, but enormous stoppers and plenty of ribbons. Ribbon everywhere—cascades of it, bows of it, cockades of it. All these frivolities are arranged with pious care, as it might be in honour of the Virgin, but in some naughty place of pleasure. Above is suspended a veritable glory of hygienic apparatus. Tubes of vulcanized rubber form a Gothic arch in which is enthroned a doll, smothered in the specialities of the shop. This is an historical object, for it was found one Christmas morning in her stocking by some little girl, now a grandmother, about the time

of the Empress Eugénie. The idol's blonde wig is stiff with metal curl-papers and a heavy embroidered veil presses down her hempen corkscrew locks. Mittens on her hands, a coral necklace round her throat, with open-work stockings, and shoes of swanskin, she lies carelessly on a bed of moss faded to the colour of tobacco, while in front of her picture postcards, arranged fanlike, represent idyllic subjects. The violets and lilies of the valley of two little Pompadour vases, of sham Dresden china, are all spotted by the flies. And here is a garland of ties, long since out of fashion, and bibs, and children's aprons, and handkerchiefs. At dolly's feet, by way of Gospel, are three books: *Domestic Cookery*, *Onanism*, *A Hundred Ways to Serve Fish*.

"These three works, my friend, are worth all the *Bibliothèque Nationale*. He who possessed them would, maybe, have found the receipt for happiness. For what is needed to be happy? To have a good digestion and your senses at peace. Moralists would add to the peace of the gizzard and of the heart—there are masculine hearts and feminine hearts, too—that of the conscience. But ask them what is conscience, and they will all go off the rails. According as they were born here or there, they will answer differently. It is a question of location. Here, the Gospel, there, the Talmud, a little farther off, the Koran.

"I sometimes think of those English travellers who start off round the world with their Bible and their umbrella. Once the line is crossed umbrella and Bible are useless luggage. Whereas in all latitudes the principles of *Domestic Cookery* and the *Art of Serving Fish* remain unshakable. 'Thou art a stove, and in this stove I will fry me a mackerel basted with olive oil and laurel leaves.' Anathema be he who does not cleanse the fish! And there are a hundred receipts for serving

perch and pike and cod. How many receipts are there for love making? The learned, who have gone to the depths of this essential matter, count up to thirty-two. What figures of rhetoric! Let us beware of affectation, my friend. Simplicity is the key to feeling.

"Suppose we go in and say good day to Madame Virginie? She is a lady of much simplicity, experience, and distinction. And she has known misfortune. The gods who gave her beauty, have alternately exalted and thrust her down. Once she recounted her life to me, a life full of merit and of storm clouds. If I still had any credit left at the Academy, I would get her some crumbs from the Prix Monthyon. When she was a little work-girl in the Rue de la Paix, long, long ago, Madame Virginie became the prey of an old general. Quite the classic thing. Madame Virginie knew how to profit by her shame and a notary took her up. But he came to grief and a criminal sentence, and the poor child went through much trouble. Turn by turn she was the joy of a doctor, an actor, an unfrocked canon, a poet, and a chemist. She has sold hats and flowers, and been dressmaker, super, masseuse, and companion. Tells fortunes, too. Once she read, in the white of an egg, that I write books. A dozen trades, and a baker's dozen of miseries! But with age, Madame Virginie's horizon has grown restricted and this sad shop is now her hermitage."

"And she sells—drapery, haberdashery, paper, herbs?"

"My child, all this is but a stage setting. Good day, Madame Virginie. You are as fresh as a rose this morning. This is my young secretary, from Nîmes, in Languedoc. Ah, what a superb town, with its Roman remains, the amphitheatre and the Maison Carrée! Were you ever at Nîmes, Madame Virginie? No? Oh, impossible! You reach there in a single night. Don't you care to take

the journey? Ah, how short the night would be with you! My young friend from Nîmes and I have been admiring the beauties of your window. But you hide away your real treasures, sly charmer that you are. Have you anything new?"

Mme. Virginie affects an air of mystery. She puts a finger on her carmined lips, and simpers: "Yes. Yes, indeed. I have just received a very pretty set." With which she climbs on to a bench and stretches for a box labelled "Armlets for the first Communion." Below, Anatole France, supporting her, pants: "Take care, dear! You make me giddy"; and, aside, "She is shaped like a Cariatid!"

Mme. Virginie plumps to earth like an overfed pigeon, her hands full of picture postcards of a certain kind. The images are double and, to get the full enjoyment from them, you need a stereoscope. Here is one on the counter, and a card is slipped in. France appears to be enraptured. "Put that one aside for me. Yes, the whole series!" Then he says to me: "Put your eye here, my friend: come, it won't blind you." And while I look at the tasteless forms of unlovely women, he goes on: "It is not for me, Madame Virginie, but for this young man. He is at the age of illusion and revels in them. Now you and I, dear lady, need something more than pictures!" The gay seller of ribbons purrs approval, pitying me. "Ah," says she, "I don't understand the youth of nowadays. In our time, now——! But after all, if it's their taste!"

I feel my cheeks grow red with shame. I stand stupidly before the apparatus. "He is fascinated," says Anatole France. "Come, my young friend, put these trophies in your pocket—on your heart! Have you a stereoscope? No! Fancy that, to come to Paris without a stereoscope! Twenty-five francs, together with the box. Here you



are : you give them away, I declare. Au revoir, Madame Virginie."

We go out. I walk by his side, laden with shame and the box. We walk in silence, to where, at the Arc de Triomphe, the underground disgorges its multitudes, and there, as I am about to go down into the station, he takes the box, and the postcards, from me.

\* \* \* \* \*

### *PROUST*

"Madame bores me to death with her talk about that young Proust. She wants me to write a preface for him. Indeed she says she's promised him one. Well, let her do it herself ! I have looked through the young man's manuscript. What rubbish ! Interminable sentences—long enough to give you consumption. Great ideas are contained in short sentences. He often begins by a participle ! He's read a great deal, but he has no taste and no plan : he doesn't know what he's making for and wanders about aimlessly. Here and there, a neat turn, an ingenious image amid a deluge of pointless things. Madame tells me : 'It's a new school.' So much the worse for me : I am too old to go back to the classroom."

\* \* \* \* \*

### *COMRADES OF THE FAUBOURG ANTOINE*

Two working-men, trade-union cabinet-makers, have brought a letter to Comrade Anatole France and await the reply.

"My dear child, go and find these excellent working-men. Tell them, I implore you, that I am at death's

door and delirious. The faculty diagnoses a most serious condition. It's my liver. It's my spleen. Give them the figure of my temperature. At the first ray of lucidity, I will attend to their interesting missive and reply to them. I am their humble servant."

The trade-union cabinet-makers receive my explanations with looks as unpleasant as those of a couple of police about to frog-march a demonstrator. They will come back in forty-eight hours for news of Comrade Anatole France and for the reply.

Great wrath on the part of M. Bergeret.

"It's Josephine's fault. She doesn't know how to filter visitors. She has a weakness for large moustaches and velveteen trousers and bristling moustaches! For Swiss visitors, too: she's from Geneva. She recognizes citizens of the midget republic by their Teutonic accent. Then it's all smiles, and a glass or two, and indiscretions. 'Yes! He's in, the Master. He's not at home to anyone, but to you——! He'll cry out a bit, but I'm used to it. It's like milk a-boiling—it bubbles up, it bubbles up! and then there's nothing left in the saucepan.'

"No, there's nothing left in the saucepan but me; and me she's got fairly bottled up. And you know what the old soldier said: "When you're bottled up, there's only one way out—down the red lane,"

"Now what on earth can they want of me, the trade-union cabinet-makers?"

He drawls the letter with a voice like a reed-pipe. This is his way of expressing irony.

"CITIZEN ANATOLE FRANCE,—

"Our trade union is giving an annual fête for its members composed of a lecture and a concert followed by a ball. A great number of cabinet-makers and their helpmates attend these fêtes, and, further, many young

persons from the surrounding districts come too with the object of having a pleasant time.

"The character of the proceedings is essentially proletarian.

"Citizen, we beg to ask if you would give your collaboration to our fête by lending us your voice for the lecture.

"Your authority on social subjects is well known and appreciated in working-men circles here, and we are certain that the cabinet-makers of the Faubourg Antoine will flock to hear you speak.

"Our members' fête will take place on the evening of September 26 in the rooms of the Golden Gate, 277 Avenue Daumesnil.

"Citizen, if you think fit to answer favourably, two comrades will wait upon you to give you all supplementary information of which you may have need on the day and at the hour you may indicate.

"Awaiting the pleasure of your reply, we remain, Citizen, etc.

"For and on behalf of the Trade Union Committee,

"The Secretary,

"E. ARBOYARD."

Anatole France remarks on the superabundance of titles, descriptions, and seals which decorate the trade-union paper. Some are printed; others are still damp.

"The whole thing has a truly ministerial air. We are revolutionaries, but we have inherited the ceremonies of royal and imperial administration. Look at the paper; it is the format à la *Tellière*, reserved for kings and princes."

"You are the prince of literature."

"A fine principality, on the sombre banks of the writing-table! Look now at this motto in a double circle:

*Happiness, Liberty.* What happiness can there be without liberty? The first of liberties is the liberty of the stomach. That lords it over all the rest, liberty of the press and of conscience included. According to Rabelais the stomach is everything in this world. Why shouldn't I write that to these cabinet-makers? It would give them the stomach-ache, maybe. There's a fine conclusion for you! The world has been searching for the seat of the soul, has it? Stop a bit: the Soul does not exist for trade unionists. Let us say the seat of trade-union sensibility and of revolutionary thought. Some put it in the head; some in the heart. The curé of Meudon, a learned man in all the sciences, put it in the gizzard. He made prayer to God Ventripotent. He proclaimed: 'Guts lead the world.' When the cabinet-makers make their cabinets and hold their trade-union meetings, they are obeying their guts. But perhaps it is not a good moment to let them know it.

"Now, wouldn't our trade unionists be astonished if they were told that the sign they have stuck on their revolutionary flag is the pious emblem of Blessed St. Francis of Assisi? The two symbolic clasped hands on their paper are identical with the two hands that serve as a sign of union for the Little Brothers and the Little Sisters. What a face they would pull, these trade unionists of the Faubourg Antoine, if they learned that they were marching under the banner of the friars! Since Josephine has let them in, we must write them a gracious letter. A gracious letter: that's to say, a fine-sounding one. There's all the difference, you see, between a letter that says something and one that says nothing. In the one the facts take the place of evidence; the other must have music in it. Now our letter will be read by a comrade cabinet-maker. We must avoid awkward expressions. Your cabinet-maker is a stickler for form

and polish. Then the spelling—ah, that's another pair of shoes. These good folk are anti-militarist. They don't like 'the force.' They have stuck a circumflex accent over my Christian name 'Anatole,' for all the world like Napoleon's hat. Imperial hats don't become me : I prefer my scull-cap.

"What shall Citizen Anatole with a circumflex accent answer? You have told them, my friend, that I am at death's door; and the meeting is to be on Saturday. Short of a miracle, I haven't the time to come back from the grave. So I'll stop there. What increases my grief is the thought that I am unable to lend the trade-union cabinet-makers the collaboration of my voice and of my authority on social subjects, so well known and appreciated by them. From my bed like Voltaire, who expired of the colic during eighty years, I dictate my regrets and my hopes.

"The letter must be well turned. Furniture- and cabinet-makers are persons of interest. It was the Faubourg Antoine that destroyed the Bastille. You must start with the idea that they are exploited. Everyone is exploited by someone. My publisher exploits me; I exploit you; and so on.

"Get up on the ladder. Take from the third shelf on the right that quarto bound in Morocco. It is Bossuet's sermons. Look through the one on the Eminent Dignity of the Poor. It is a masterpiece; and how modern! There is a terrible passage where Master Benigne says to the rich of his day: 'Your wealth is neither your gold nor your silver, but the patience of the poor.' That is not the exact phrase, but the sense. It is not hackneyed and it suits the cabinet-makers to a T. You must brush up the passage a bit, and sprinkle it with some topical allusions and references to politics. That will give us twelve or fifteen lines, for letters like this made to be



shouted out in public must, I repeat, be all music. The idea comes in like a refrain.

"Get up on the ladder again. You'll find a tiny blue work in the shelf for little books. That's it: *Les Paroles d'un Croyant* of Lamennais. Give it me. Ah, here's the passage. The abbé—he still was one—has a vision like St. John. Let us take whatever wheat comes to our garner. Here, this is thoroughly international. Copy the whole passage. Has the lot of cabinet-makers changed much since Louis Philippe?"

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### CAVIARE

A breeze over the *hors-d'œuvre*. Caviare is served. He sniffs the dish and passes it to Monsieur.

Madame: "You turn up your nose at the caviare?"

"My dear friend, I have small sympathy with sturgeon roe. It smells of the marsh, and is as black as Erebus."

"You don't know what you are despising. It is Princess X who sent it for you: the very same caviare that figures on the Tsar's table."

"In heaven's name, then, let it stay there."

Nibbling the radishes, Anatole France pursues to Monsieur:

"Your famous caviare is as old as the hills. In Rabelais, Pantagruel feasts on pickled roe and anchovies. But he was a guzzler: as for me, I don't like these strange dainties from foreign parts."

He turns to Madame and, making her an elaborate bow:

"Dare I ask our hostess why, at her table, we are never allowed French *hors-d'œuvre*?"

"What an astonishing form of patriotism!"

"Madame, cast aside the barbarous presents of the

Neva and the Vistula. Leave caviare to Tartar princes, and give us men of Paris, Paris dainties."

"And what may they be? Describe your bill of fare, pray."

"Why, Madame, there is red tongue."

"Red tongue—how disgusting!"

"It is the queen of the pork butcher's window, and his masterpiece. Merely to look at it, decked like a cardinal, brings water to one's mouth. Then its shape is so taking and virile; it might be a marble column. And the pistachio in the heart of it smiles at you!"

"A very love poem!"

"I have a weakness for it. I am never given it. Well, well, one of these days, on my way here I will buy large rounds of it with the accompanying supererogatory pickles. And I shall crave leave to eat my tongue at your table."

"You will do as you please; it's by no means your first eccentricity. Red tongue! How common! It suggests the small shop, the concierge's room. People eat it on public benches, or on the fortifications, don't they? But you? You, the most delicate wit of our time! I am astonished that you do not go on a day of some solemn function at the Academy and eat your beloved red tongue there."

"An excellent idea, Madame. But I shall not take the pickles."

"And what else besides red tongue must I seek out in the pork butcher's paradise?"

"There is mortadella; there is brawn."

"Enough, enough. You make me quite unwell."

"Then there are chitterlings, and forcemeat balls. In the time of *Ménage* folk spoke of 'dressing chitterlings.' I like well-dressed chitterlings, with the proviso of course that their odour be not too fruity."

"Happily, Monsieur France, we have no guests at

lunch, and you can display the shamelessness of your appetite *in camera*. Though I should like to send the footman out of the room. François is scandalized."

"Then there is black-pudding and its brother which is white. Who shall say which is the more delicious? And those little flat pork sausages! How came I to forget them?"

"Marvellous omission, indeed!"

"They were Napoleon's favourite dish. But they were never served up to him: his cook thought the dish too democratic."

"A man of sense, plainly."

"Yes, but the Emperor was the Emperor. One day, he sent for Dunan—that was the cook's name—and said to him: 'I want pork sausages'—'But, Sire, it is not a dish known to culinary art! It is not aristocratic! It would not be suitable for your Majesty! I should fear to dishonour my kitchens and to discourage the Imperial table.' 'I want pork sausages,' repeated the Emperor, in the tone in which he dictated the peace of Tilsit. The cook gave way, and on the morrow a dish of flat sausages was served to the Emperor at luncheon. Hardly had he tasted them when he hurled his plate across the table, wrenched off the cloth and everything on it, flung the whole on to the carpet, stamped on the dishes, and made off to his study, boiling with rage. Poor Dunan expected to be shot. But the storm passed. Its explanation was that the cook, thinking to do well, had substituted white of partridge for the pork. And the tastelessness of it upset the Eagle."

"Perhaps it was from eating too much mortadella and red tongue and pork sausages that your Eagle died of cancer of the stomach. No, Monsieur France, though you are the phoenix of French literature, never will I allow such horrors to be served at my table. Bring, if you will,

a basket of your piggishnesses with you, like a boy going to school. I have too much respect for my health and for that of my guests. See what doctors say! They, who never agree about anything else, agree on this one point, that pork butchers' meats spoil the stomach, irritate the skin, and ruin the intestines. There should be a law to prevent their being sold."

"Why, Madame, you talk like the late Mr. Moses! But we are in France! This is not Jerusalem! The legislator of the Hebrews forbade the people of God to eat pork, did he? If so, it was because his beloved, chosen people were the sink of the universe, the receptacle of every infirmity and every vice. Now we Christians——"

"My word, you're a good specimen of a Christian!" mocks Monsieur.

"—we Christians, we are of a lusty stock, and after the fashion of our ancestors, who ate 'em till they fairly burst, can swallow ells of sausage and black-pudding and chitterlings. Rabelais' work is all garlanded with them. Nothing is a finer spur to appetite than pork butcher's meat."

"Well then," cries Monsieur, filling a bumper, "let's drink to the health of Rabelais and chitterlings! Down with Moses! But don't forget that Madame is of the chosen people."

"Good heavens, it's true! Where can I have been woolgathering?"

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## TWO DEFINITIONS

"You are very inconstant!"

"Constancy is another word for impotence."

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"When I say 'humanity,' don't take this in Jaurès' sense. I mean: 'the humanities.'"

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### THE NUBIAN

It is Wednesday morning, the day of the popular reception at the Villa Said. Everyone can fish his particular fancy from the lucky bag of the master's compliments. It is a universal *As you Like it*.

To-day a kind of female dwarf has insinuated herself into the throng. She is black, wrinkled, rumped, as sticky as an olive after early frost, and she has got herself up like a circus dog who runs round collecting pennies. She flings herself on to Anatole France's hands and covers them with tears, sighs, saliva, and convulsions. What protestations! What raptures! The sum total is a nameless gibberish, like a hen clucking.

"At last I see you, Master!" The stranger puts acute accents on every syllable, and offers the novelist a peony.

France accepts the flower and lets his hands be kissed with a grace at once royal and episcopal. Peony in hand he looks like the king of clubs as he motions the visitor to a seat; but she refuses the commonplace armchair and curls herself like a cat, on a cushion at the Master's feet.

Where does she spring from, and what does she want? It is hard to discover, so strange is her accent and so great her volubility. The words spout from her lips, like water from a constricted tap. In the midst of the sputtering a fact swims to the surface: she hails from Bohemia and is the great friend of Rodin, in fact his consoler and his Egeria. The celebrated sculptor has begged her to sit for a statue of Justice. She has, out of modesty, refused, but he is besieging her. Should she yield? Can one



resist genius? That is what she has come to ask Anatole France.

"There is no modesty in the face of genius. Genius is above prejudice."

"Master, Rodin wants to do your bust."

"One good turn deserves another, and no mistake. If he does my bust, I will do his biography."

The Nubian—so called for short from France's first name for her, the Danubian—has fairly tamed Josephine, till now she is every morning at the Villa Said. Does the Master refuse to receive her, she retreats with pious resignation into the crypt-like kitchen. This little wisp of a woman is a curious mixture of obstinacy and sweetness. She gives Josephine receipts for cooling drinks and poultices. At once apostle and anarchist, she can quote you Jaurès, Jesus, and Karl Marx. She has abandoned her country, her husband, her only son—whose photograph she produces—her palace and her caste to labour for the good of humanity, and now she works in this Arcadia keeping guard over the Master's victuals and his clothes. "What boot-polish do they get for him? What do they use to preserve the woollen things from moth? Where is the flannel for the Master's vests bought? How many lumps of sugar are put in coffee? Three? Far too much. Why, it's murder! And he suffering from his liver!" Ah, this *pot-pourri* of the Gospel and Domestic Cookery of dynamite and marmalade lisped and burbled with mouth almost closed and eyes swimming in ecstasy!

Sometimes so much sweetness exasperates Josephine, who rails at the Nubian for a limpet and thrusts her out of doors. Then we find her at midday, before the gate of the Villa Said, a rose in her hand. She flings her arms round the Master and all but sinks at his feet in the midst of passing cabs, another Magdalene at the foot of the

Cross. She cannot bear not to kiss that hand of genius : it is her daily bread ! Vainly Anatole France seeks to flee her by leaping into the first vehicle, for she leaps after him. He is much annoyed, because of Madame. But the Nubian asks for nothing better than to compromise him.

By dint of obstinacy, and by swallowing slights, and distributing flowers and recipes, the Nubian has won her right to enter the house as she lists. Like duchesses in the time of Saint-Simon, she has her stool at the Master's feet, and not only is admitted with the democratic host on Wednesday, but on Sunday too at the select meeting where Cabinet ministers, great publishers, and newspaper editors are to be seen. Before long the dwarfish creature has gone a step farther, and herself introduces publishers, painters and autograph hunters. On her advice the Master has changed his diet, and his doctor. At the Villa Said she wields almost the same power as Madame in the Avenue Hoche : she has become something between housekeeper and Delphic oracle.

One morning the Nubian had on a white hat, crowned like a cake, with cherries, and France complimented her on it. " It becomes you," said he, " to perfection."

" My hats," cooed the Nubian, " I make them myself. No modiste, no ! It is a principle with me. Everything on me, I make myself—my chemises, my stockings——"

" And your shoes ? "

" And my shoes ! " She showed with pride a kind of antique string-sandals. Then coming back to the hat, the Nubian explained :

" I have a horror of lies. The women of these parts love lies, for they are liars. They put on their heads artificial flowers, and false pearls, and dead birds. My cherries—they are real. You can see, Master, for yourself."

"But it's a religious rite!" exclaimed Anatole France, as he plucked and swallowed a cherry from the cake hat.

"Indeed it is. I trim my hat according to the season with fruits and flowers, which I buy not from flower-shops—they are liars, too, and 'make-up' their flowers!—but from the grocer and the fruiterer. No middle-class prejudices for me! A branch of celery or a morsel of parsley is as fair and lovely as a branch of holly."

"True, indeed. And your love of truth does not go unrewarded. When evening comes, you have the where-withal to garnish your fruit salad and your soup tureen."

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#### *MANNERS AND THE REPUBLIC*

Madame reminds Anatole France:

"We dine to-night at the X's. Don't forget. Eight o'clock."

"And I?" exclaims Monsieur. "Don't I exist any more? It's not that I have the least wish to go to those people: I much prefer to feed here. But, really now, husbands ought to be invited with their wives! At least, it used to be so in the days of polite manners. But, with the republic, this unfortunate country is going to the dogs."

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#### *THE POLITICAL BAROMETER*

"You know, he's not so stupid as he seems. Once he actually gave me a lesson. We were speaking of war with Germany, which our ministers and our diplomatists were doing all in their power to make burst out—and in the end they'll succeed. Newsboys were crying special

editions, and François, sent by Madame for the papers, came back with a packet which he gave to me. Plainly he was wrong. He should have given them to Monsieur. Monsieur is the husband. Monsieur pays. I began hunting through the papers with my customary awkwardness, and a crowd around, worrying me with: 'Is it war? Is it peace?' Monsieur snatched the papers from my hands and mocked me!

" 'Here's a man famous throughout the world! A member of the *Académie Française*! And he doesn't know how to read a newspaper. You want to know, my poor France, if the wind sits in the fair quarter, or a tempest's beating up. Don't you worry over the leaders or the telegrams, all more or less, if not quite, inspired. Go straight to the Bourse report. That's where you'll find the pulse of public opinion. What are French *rentes* at? Gone up? Then it's peace. Go and make chuckies or cocked hats out of your newspapers!' I was humiliated."

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#### MARIANNE

"Democracy? A harlot, who has given herself to everyone—philosophers, priests, bankers, a Corsican corporal. A slut for soldiers."

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#### SAINTE-BEUVE'S WOOLLIES

"The Goncourts viewed their contemporaries with a baleful eye. In their *Journal* they note a visit to Sainte-Beuve: 'We found him muffled up in dirty woollies.' Dirty! Dirty! Sainte-Beuve was ugly. He was a mixture of ecclesiastic and pedant. But he was dainty-

clean. He was a shivery creature and wrapped himself up in woolly garments. These woollies knitted for him by Princess Mathilde were not dirty, but imperial."

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### THROUGH THE KEYHOLE

He dined, on the eve, with Monod, of the Assistance Publique, and met Judith Gautier. He had known Théophile Gautier in dotage and visited him at Auteuil, where the old writer received the young poet with kindness.

The conversation was interspersed with pauses and lacunæ. The author of *Emaux et Camées* leaned heavily back in his armchair and closed his eyes. Doubtless he was seeking some rich rhyme, some rare epithet. No! He was asleep. Then after having tasted some sweet moments of oblivion, he raised his heavy lids and smiled at his visitor: "Where were we, my friend?"

"He brought up his daughters in the strangest way. He made them take lessons in Chinese! In their youth the little Gautiers were lovely to look upon. When people complimented him on their beauty, good Théo would shrug his shoulders regretfully, and sigh: 'That's how we have made them—for others to enjoy!'

"After her divorce poor Judith had little but her Chinese for dinner. She lodged in an attic of a small hotel near the Odéon. The poor woman was reduced to wash her solitary chemise of an evening in the basin with her little bit of soap, and while she squeezed it out the waiters squeezed one another against her door to get a peep through the keyhole. The picture was pathetic, you think? Well, the poet's daughter to-day is a bit worn, but still plump. And then the indiscreet personnel was doubtless of the opinion of the late Duc d'Aumale. When he showed visitors of distinction Raphael's *Three*



*Graces* at Chantilly, he never failed to remark on the discretion of that sweetest of painters :

“ ‘ These three Graces are the three ages, the three fruitful seasons of Woman—Summer, Autumn, and Winter. See, he has painted winter on the side on which women age the least ! ’ ”

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### *THE RUBBED VENUS*

At his old friend Prouté's, in the disorder of the cheap print box, where the cheapest is fifty centimes and the dearest fifteen francs, Anatole France has unearthed a Venus by Boucher. At least so he thinks. M. Bergeret carries off the treasure pressed to his heart with the ecstasy of a boy at his first communion, reciting litanies of Amathontis. “ Venus of the people, pray for us ! Venus Apostrophia, keep ardent our hearts ! Venus of the sea, direct our barks towards Cythera ! Venus Vulgivaga, lead us at night to friendly meeting-places ! ”

Madame listens to this mythology with visible disgust. The fact is that the conventions have been broken : Anatole France has gone marauding in the eighteenth century, which is Madame's own preserve. She snatches the print from his feverish hands, applies her lorgnon as a magnifying-glass to the goddess, and with a cruel curl on her lip hisses :

“ Only you could have bought such a piece of filthiness.”

“ Filthiness ! Venus ! ”

“ Yes ! Look at your goddess—here. She has been rubbed.”

“ It is true,” confesses France. “ My Venus has been rubbed. I hadn't noticed it—I am so innocent, whereas

you are so observant ! But by whom has the mother of the graces, of laughter, and of games been so cruelly caressed ? For, after all, it is a homage, a sacrifice."

"Homage to whom, pray ? To this remarkably stout goddess of yours ? The painter must have made his chambermaid pose for it."

"Chambermaid, Madame ! With what a wry mouth you pronounce the word. For me, it is one full of sweetness. Chambermaid ! That is, a maid who has care of your chamber, who gives it a soul and a heart."

"Don't get so excited ! Your imagery is too much for me, really. Send your Venus to be cleaned ; and then, if you feel like it hang her over your couch."

"Indeed I will not send my Venus to the cleaner. That rubbed spot becomes her rather well. She has resisted the sacrilege, and sacrilege, for a deposed goddess, is better than indifference. Now who committed the sacrilege ? A young man, an old one, one innocent or a debauchee ? The case is not rare."

"What is not rare ? " asks Madame. "Rubbed Venuses ? "

"Venuses, Madame, and other goddesses too when their charms are sufficient."

"You seem to me to have explored the subject very thoroughly ! "

"Do you remember the statue of Justice, in St. Peter's at Rome, Madame ? "

"How should I remember it ? There are so many statues there ! Whereabouts is this Justice ? "

"On the tomb of a pope. According to what the attendants say, this marble Venus was the object of extravagant homage on the part of a Spaniard—since which affront she always wears a gilded shift."

"Well then, put your Venus into a gilded shift. But the ill is done, and can't be undone."

"Lucian too speaks of excessive homage rendered to the Venus of Praxiteles."

"Upon my word, the astonishing man keeps a record of every statue that has been defiled by a mad-man!"

"Do you remember the statue on the Capitol, which we admired together? She spent two centuries in a tavern-keeper's cellar, who shut his eyes on the privacies taken by his clients with the Olympian one. That was a fate which Claudius' wife might have envied."

"Whose fate? The tavern-keeper's?"

"No, Venus'. Then you have admired the Hermaphrodite at the Louvre? That lovely marble has been worn down by the visitors' caresses. Things came to such a point that the curator had to put up a solid barrier to protect that figure, so monstrous and yet so charming as to satisfy the most refined."

"The most refined? The epithet, I trust, refers to your sex, of which such extravagances are the speciality. Mine does not indulge in them."

"It must be that we are the more sensitive. Our frenzy is such as to make even marble take life—witness the miracle of Pygmalion. And then, Madame, are you altogether innocent?"

"I! I go into fits over statues?"

"Not you in particular, but women in general. Remember Leodamia, who found again in a statue her absent spouse!"

"Leodamia must have been of an exceptional composition. Don't expect me to go to the antique department to replace my husband, I beg."

"And you do well not to, Madame. Don't go too close to the fire. The Church thunders against nudity, in flesh or in stone; for by such objects good souls are wounded and naughty thoughts aroused."

"It's most of all sanctimonious ecclesiastics who have the naughty thoughts."

"True, Madame. It is a question that greatly preoccupies them. Theologians spend much time wondering how modesty will fare in the vale of Jehoshaphat."

"They must have a lot of time to waste."

"For you know, Madame, in the Day of Judgment, the day of dread, the day of terror, we shall all be united together in that narrow valley, stripped of veils and vanity. Ask Loti how small Jehoshaphat is. He has been there. The throng will be thick, and the same thing will happen that happens in all throngs, on the 14th of July, in the underground, and even in church on days of great marriages. Thus St. Augustine in his *City of God* reveals to us that in the valley of Jehoshaphat men and women will all have the same sex."

"And what sex, pray?"

"Why, that of St. Augustine, to be sure!"

"Ha, ha!" cries Madame. "That will be a fine sight. If only there is time to look round!"

She sniffs the engraving over again. Then she declares:

"No, this Venus of yours is really disgusting."

Anatole France (heroically): "Here, Brousson, take it, and hang it up in your room."

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### JULIETTE AND RENÉ

"She positively won't give in! She will stick to it! After so many conquests she might well lay down her arms and seek repose. No! The thought of old age exasperates her. She is the same age as myself—a little more perhaps, but let us be discreet. But a man does not grow old, or at least he does not grow older after sixty. She imagines that she takes people in by dressing like a

fairly princess. I assure you that she never goes out now but she's got up like a girl going to her first Communion or to get the good-conduct prize. The other day we went to lunch at a restaurant, she, poor dear, dressed like sweet seventeen. Suddenly we came into the midst of a band of printer's apprentices. Imagine the glances they threw at my poor friend, looking haughtily down on them as she tottered by on her Louis XV heels with a gay little hat stuck on one side of her head. You might have taken her for the Du Barry. The young rascals pinched and poked one another, and pulled faces like vicious monkeys. But she didn't notice anything. She merely deplored the immorality of the times.

“‘Formerly, when young men were smitten with a woman, they contained their desires: the unbridled passion of these workmen is shocking.’

“Like the good Samaritan, I poured oil and wine on to the wound. ‘You forget,’ said I, ‘the little chimney-sweepers who turned to look at Juliette Récamier as she passed.’

“‘If I am Juliette, you are Alphonse!’”



#### *CONJUGAL FRACTIONS*

“Your honest citizen calls his wife ‘My half’; an honourable appellation. That is to say that in the middle classes a woman generally contents herself with a single lover. So when husband cooes: ‘My dear half,’ it is as if he said: ‘O half of the woman who is still mine, it is to you that I’m speaking.’ Somewhere or other I read the story of a very good husband, married to a lady of very light manners, of whose successful adorers he kept strict record. When there were two he called his wife lovingly: ‘My third.’ When three ‘My quarter.’ One



evening, for example, he said to her : ‘ Good night, my sweet fifth.’ And the next morning : ‘ My dear sixth, have you slept well ? ’ ”

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*PRINCIPLES AND A TEAR*

“ We have been friends from infancy. His father was a shopkeeper and a neighbour of my father, and he and I, being of the same age, played about in the street and on the river-bank together. I think he is something now in the Ministry of Finance. Anyway, he is a fierce anti-clerical ; his wife is, too, and they had brought up their darling, only child, a girl of ten, far from all superstition. One day there was great agitation in the house. The little one had begun to waste away. Before, she was lively and mischievous : now, she had fallen into a decline. The doctors, consulted, shook their heads and dosed her vainly. At last she confessed :

“ ‘ I am sad, and I am hurt with you, because you never take me to church, like the other girls at school.’

“ ‘ To church ? ’

“ ‘ Yes. They are doing their first Communion. They have dresses of white, like brides, with white shoes and white veils and crowns of white roses and white chaplets and white bags and white missals.’

“ After much hesitation, they decided to buy an outfit for a girl’s first Communion in a lump at the Bon Marché, with all the fittings. But the determined little thing would have none of it.

“ ‘ I want to do my first Communion like all the other girls, to confess, and to go to the altar. I don’t want to dress up : this is not Carnival time.’

“ What sighs and what tears ensued ! The distressed father came to see me, to ask what they should do.

“ ‘ Send her to confession,’ said I, ‘ and let her accomplish all the rites.’ ”

“ ‘ What, you, France, you recommend that ! And your principles ? ’ ”

“ I answered : ‘ One tear of a little child is stronger than all the principles.’ ”

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#### THE UNKNOWN LADY

Someone asked him :

“ But don’t you believe in virtue ? ”

“ I confess, I have never met the lady ! ”

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#### COMMENTAIRES ON LAMARTINE

General de S—— is declaiming against the laws prohibiting religion to be taught in the schools.

“ If I were a schoolmaster,” says he, “ and I were forbidden to recite a prayer to the children, I should play a fine trick on these Jacobin idiots. I should save my soul and my job at the same time.”

“ Give us your receipt.”

“ Very simple. It’s absolutely prohibited to recite : ‘ Our Father which art in Heaven.’ The adorable Lord’s Prayer is a crime against the dogma of the lay state. But it’s perfectly open to make tiny tots drone through *The Child’s Prayer on his Awakening* by Lamartine. The poetry saves the sense.

“ ‘ O Father whom my father adored,  
Thou, who canst be named but on bended knee,  
Thou whose name of dread and sweetness——’ ”

“ Do you consider those lines quite in the spirit of the

Evangelist ? True, they run easily. But they are really a sort of *Marseillaise*.

“ ‘ To the gifts thy bounty lavishes  
All the universe is bidden ;  
Not an insect is forgotten  
At the board of Nature’s banquet.’ ”

“ A fine love feast, indeed ! What an Evangelist’s banquet, where everyone gobbles up his neighbour ! The lamb eats the wild thyme : how nice for the wild thyme !

“ ‘ The goat’s love for the laburnum—— ’ ”

Delightful kind of love !

“ ‘ The fly on the edge of the vase  
Sips the white drops of my milk.’ ”

“ I ask you ! Poor Lamartine has got into a good mess with the inspector of health ! Saint-Point was a paradise for flies, you see. There were clouds of them all over the place, even on the little chap’s bowl, and in his milk and on his bib. It’s a miracle that little Alphonse didn’t pop off with typhoid. Really now ! And if flies would only content themselves with sipping the white drops ! But they adulterate it with filth. They pay for what they steal with microbes. The existence of Providence demonstrated by flies ! Then, in heaven’s name, why not by spiders and snakes ? There’s a stanza missing in that sonorous prayer—a stanza for the bugs. Yet there must have been enough of them among those squirrels ! ”

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#### STUPIDITY OR MALICE ?

Lamartine, crushed by debt, was reduced to accept the hospitality of Napoleon III. The Swan of Mâcon in the aviary of Badinguet ! The imperial villa was in the

midst of the Bois de Boulogne. One morning the young man employed to do the garden came, red with anger, to the poet's niece, Valentine de Saint-Point.

"Mam'zelle, I am leaving. I can't bear that man's malice any longer!"

"Malice! M. de Lamartine malicious!"

"Yes, he is. I had just finished a basket of growing roses, a beautiful basket. Well, he came and threw his coat over it, and sat down and broke them all. Just like a brute!"

"Choose your words more carefully, young man. It is easy to see that you don't know who M. de Lamartine is. He is a very great man, and the best of men. His heart is as great as his head. But his brain is so full of things that he may well have spoiled your roses without knowing it. Most likely he did not even see them!"

"I see what it is, Mam'zelle. You want to make out that it was stupidity and not malice. And I tell you it was malice and not stupidity!"

"How dare you?"

"Shall I prove it to you? My basket was just by the fountain. Did he throw his coat over the fountain, to sit down upon that?"

\* \* \* \* \*

#### THE LAPIS-LAZULI MANTELPIECE

I offer a first edition of *Esther*, that I found in a box on the embankment. He thanks me for it, and we go into the library. There he opens a glass case and pompously compares it with five copies of *Esther*. By the side of these sumptuous volumes mine is a rag. One bears the royal arms of France. Another was Mirabeau's copy. This third belonged to Sainte-Beuve. And alongside are all the possible original editions of Racine's play

for each of which as he produces it the Master has an anecdote. I feel like a humiliated schoolboy, and am tempted to put back my booklet into my pocket. At last France perceives my discomfiture and to cheer me up, tells me the following little tale :

“ That was unkind of me, my young friend. Truly booklovers are heartless folk. You find a first edition of Racine, my favourite poet, whom you too love, and full of affection for your old master hurry to him with your booty. I should say, with your captive Esther. Then he, pitilessly, opens his harem and shows you three score and ten sultanas, reclining on ottomans, ready to do his bidding. Now there was once a young man, young and generous like you, who offered a rich financier a tie-pin of lapis lazuli. By the way, was it lapis lazuli ? Is it a stone worn in ties ? I am not well versed in jewellery. Well, our Turcaret took the pin, turned it about in contemptuous fingers, and then remarked : ‘ Thanks. In my country-house I have a mantelpiece of lapis lazuli. ’ ”

\* \* \* \* \*

### CLIO

He begins an anecdote with this phrase : “ The most abandoned of the Muses.” He repeats it three times : “ The most abandoned of the Muses.” We look at one another. Which of them is it ? “ Why,” says he, “ History ! ”

\* \* \* \* \*

### SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

He learns the sudden death of F——, the novelist.  
“ And what did he die of ? ”



"He had uremia, and diabetes, and——"

"Ah, that was why he wrote in such a soapy, edifying style!"

\* \* \* \* \*

*PICNIC WITH MADAME ROLAND*

"To-day, my young friend, we lunch with Manette Phlipon."

"With Manette Phlipon?"

"Yes, with Madame Roland: 'Oh, Justice, how many crimes are committed in thy name!' you know. We shall lay the table in her little bedroom, where her bed once stood. This virginal retreat is now occupied by the Danubian, the adorable Madame de —— . Her grace, her beauty, her liberalism fully entitle her to sleep where Manette once read Plutarch. I have often promised to go and picnic with her and to take you. She is so devoted to me, and one must keep one's promises. To-day is the date fixed. You shall come with me, and together we shall visit this historic room."

"After to-day it will be doubly historic, Master."

"Flatterer! The Danubian, it has doubtless not escaped you, has become more and more dear to me. Her fortune does not equal her merits. On the banks of the blue Danube she left the blackest of husbands and the tenderest of sons. Heaven persecutes her. There, she was a princess—at least she tells me so. We must take a yard measure with us. It is my idea to put the lady, who in heart and spirit belongs to another age, in a setting worthy of her. It will be rare entertainment to reconstruct Manette Phlipon's chamber. I have here a quantity of furniture which is only in the way, and I can't do anything with it. This couch, for instance, of blue lacquer with the Graces in cloth of Jouy. Madame

says that it is hopelessly faked, but that's because she didn't buy it. Besides, for a little Phlipon, the daughter of an optician—— ! ”

The “hopelessly faked ” Trianon bed is hoisted on to a cab, together with a plaster St. Martha with the Tarasque, two adoring angels in papier mâché, and various prints. Then off we clatter towards the statue of Henri IV, the Constant Lover.

On the way, to the tune of jumping furniture, he discourses of Manette Phlipon. She was beautiful. Portraits of her are preserved in the attics of the palace at Versailles. And then she has described herself pleasingly. A woman's *écritoire* is her mirror. Manette was plump. Manette was well made. She must have been dimpled everywhere, and dimples anywhere add charm. Manette read Plutarch and many another folio. She was a sweet, learned little thing. She had a bosom and brains ! “ In women, the bosom's the thing : a fig for brains ! Manette was modest and dazzling : a bouquet of lilies and roses. The comparison is a shade stale. Have you something better ? ”

“ No, Master. But the complexion of the Danubian reminds me rather of care and saffron.”

“ You are an aspic, a young basilisk. Manette's face was the purest oval. She had blue eyes, under black eyebrows, and long black lashes. Her alabaster forehead was shaded by a forest of brown hair. Her mouth was full of mischievous play. And with all that, how came this gazelle of the Pont Neuf to let herself be chained by that self-sufficient ass Roland de la Platière ? ”

Now we are at Henri IV's statue. A fresh tap of anecdote is opened.

“ This, above all others, is a spot sacred to patriotism. In France of old, and most of all after Collet's patriotic play, *King Henry's Hunting Party*, no Frenchman could

behold this horse without tears. Under Louis XIII it was the most stinking place in Paris, as witness Petit's epigram :—

O cheval de bronze  
Où l'on voit d'étrons pleus qu'onze.

Why was the Constant Lover so popular? France had for him the love of a wet nurse for her charge. It was because he was brave. Because he was a lover. Because he was constantly in love. It is for their faults that men are cherished by women and peoples. Mary Jane likes to be knocked about. Henri IV knocked about the Parisians. Doubtless he made war more human and civilized. But the story of his sending food into besieged Paris is apocryphal. To end the civil war, the capital had to be taken, and Paris was so obstinate and made so fanatic by the priests that the populace ate bread made of bones from the Innocents cemetery. That is the true history. It is also true that Henri's captains, from greed or vanity, allowed corn to enter the city at various points. They exchanged it for scarves, plumes, silk stockings, gloves and other fopperies. But the king did not know about it."

We disembark on terra firma; but at the pink historic house, marked with a plaque, no one knows the name of Mme. de —.

"This is not a house for ladies alone," adds the concierge severely. "That is not our style."

"Perhaps she lives in the next house?" suggests Anatole France, "it's of the same period."

We ring. It is a nursing-home, that reeks of iodoform, and we have to admit it is no place for picnics. We call at the houses round. "Madame de —?" "Don't know her." Finally M. Bergeret bethinks himself of a visiting-card that he has been rolling and unrolling ever since our departure. Deciphered, it reads 8, Place Dauphine.

Heaven be praised ! the house is not above a quarter of a mile from that of Mme. Roland. But how can the bed be got into it ? The staircase is narrow and sticky, as treacherous as a well. It ends in a kind of barrack-corridor, flanked by doors with little windows in them and lacking bells. On the walls, traced in the filthy dust, are obscene drawings, a homage to Priapus that seems of good omen to M. Bergeret.

" 'Tis almost bombastic, this atmosphere of virility reigning here. These folks must make love day and night. But they must take care not to die, for how should the coffin pass out ? Perhaps they lower the dead by the window or the chimney."

The place reeks of stuffiness, herring, and fried onions. We knock at doors, doubtfully, and receive in reply most undoubtful abuse. By now we have explored two floors. At the extreme end is a corkscrew staircase with a rope for banister. On a narrow landing are two doors separated by a stinking little sink in the wall. Victory ! A card, like unto that the Master has been crumpling all morning, is pinned to the panel.

At the sight of Anatole France, the Danubian falls into an epilepsy of delight, with little shrieks of a child being tickled and expectant of sweets. She gives forth cluckings and cooings, warm tears, tremulous spasms, and covers the novelist's hand with greedy kisses.

" Oh, I cannot say how much I am touched ! Oh, it is too much ! "

" And our picnic ? " suggests France, anxious to dam the torrents of frenzied emotion.

" Here ! We will have it here ! "

" Here ? But there is no table."

This reminds us of the furniture brought from the Villa Said. The cabman and the concierge tumble them somehow up the staircase, but the Marie Antoinette bed,

its corners somewhat damaged, remains perforce on the landing in company with the papier-mâché angels. The mirror, however, is fixed in the place of honour.

"How I envy it!" sighs M. Bergeret. "Its fair eye, icy and indiscreet, will watch your déshabillé every morning. But our picnic? Shall we eat squatting on the mat, after the manner of the mamamouchis?"

"Oh no!" cries the Nubian in triumph. "Look!"

She pushes the night table against the toilet table, covering the two with a bath towel by way of tablecloth.

"How delightfully picturesque!" she pursues. "Just like the times of Madame Roland!"

There is but one course, a unique national dish of the Nubian's that, according to her, is the most delicious thing on earth. It is at once a soup and a stew that has been simmering over a paraffin lamp, and from this hotch-potch the luck of the spoon will fish you out morsels of beef, of pork, of mutton, carrots, turnips, cabbage, and haricot beans. The stomach of a Cossack would be needed to digest this putty, which our hostess dispenses generously and volubly. Her country's poets have chanted the glories of this soup: it is the national dish!

"Alas, that I have not a nationalist stomach," says France, after trying it.

That is a sad blow to the Nubian, who had great expectations of her enchanted cauldron. We fall back on the *hors d'œuvre* and the dessert. There are anchovies, radishes, mortadella, and Camembert. But, ah! the Nubian has forgotten the wine. Never mind: Brousson shall go fetch it.

"Have you a basket, dearest life, or a string bag?"

"No: no! Nature, you see——"

"Nature is all very fine, but it's not always convenient. Together with the wine, young manciple, bring some cakes."



It is a real feast. In the little room that Manette Phlipon might have inhabited, the anchovies, mortadella, and sweet biscuits are dispatched with the aid of Argenteuil wine of pleasing qualities. The service is much of a muchness with the meal. Out of respect for the *Académie Française* the Master is provided with a glass bowl from the washhand-stand. His immortality obtains, over and above this, a blue toothglass, somewhat discoloured by peppermint mouthwash. For my part, I, simple mortal, get a chipped saucer and a cup that lacks a handle. There are roses in the water-jug and on the chimney an autographed portrait of Rodin. The toothbrush-stand and the soap-dishes serve to hold the *hors d'œuvre*.

Simplicity! Truth! Nature!

Where shall we make the strawberry mess? In the basin, to be sure. It is Anatole France who undertakes the job. He excels at it, it seems; but, for want of more appropriate utensils, uses a pen and a paper-knife to stir with. At every whisk, the lady lets forth cries like a peacock. "Oh, what genius! Just like the days of Madame Roland!" We eat with our fingers and with grace. The saveloy is fraternally divided. The sardines and anchovies are more difficult to manage, and, by reason of their fishiness, the dishes that have held them must be washed at the sink on the landing.

"Charming, charming," Anatole France keeps repeating.

"Nature! Madame Roland!" cooes the Nubian.

"Above all," whispers M. Bergeret, "not a word to Madame. She can't bear picnics."

Nevertheless, even he asks for a napkin.

"A napkin! How extraordinary! But there was one in the room! At least a towel—a bath towel. Where can it be? Ah, of course: it's been turned into the tablecloth!"

"All right. We'll wipe our fingers on the cloth, after the manner of our ancestors. Even so did the great lords at Court. Even so did Montesquieu. It is in the memoirs of the Marquise de Crequy. I made her descendant—of *Les Hortensias Bleus*, you know—read the passage. What a face he made!"

The Nubian protests. She has linen in abundance, in her trunk. Therewith she hunts in it, and fishes out hats, stockings, boots, dressing-gowns, handkerchiefs, and ostrich feathers. France would have a pair of knickers. He will take the right leg and I the left.

The bowl for the sponge becomes a punch-bowl, and the liquor flames. Our feast becomes an orgy.

He wants to be off.

"Not yet! Not yet!" cooes our hostess. "Wait a little, Master. I have something to show you by night, something quite amazing!"

He is on tenterhooks, and to calm his impatience, the heiress of Manette Phlipon recites the most beautiful poems of her country. Also, she recites the history of her life and the catastrophes with which it abounds. France demands the nocturnal and amazing something. She leads him to the window, which gives on to the *Quai aux Lunettes*, the *Quai des Morfondus*.

"There! Look!" cries the Nubian.

"What, the Pont Neuf?"

"No, no! The Belle Jardinière, there opposite!"

"The Belle Jardinière!"

"Yes, look how the illuminated advertisement is reflected in the Seine! Oh, Master, what a picture!"

"One might almost fancy oneself in Venice," sighs Anatole France.

\* \* \* \* \*

REVOLUTION IN THE FURNITURE

"How am I looking this morning? Look me well over first, Monsieur Brousson."

"How are you looking? Naughty!"

"That's it, my friend, naughty. Laugh away, sir jester! 'Oh, what fun to see a naughty fellow of nearly sixty!'

"Molière's lines, you know, in the *École des Maris*. I am more than sixty. Must I then go back to the hornèd school? I am going to tell you something. In my room there I have the sweetest, the fairest, the most indiscreet of fair ones. Do you want to see her? Your nose twitches, little libertine! Come, then."

He takes me into his bedroom where, on the square writing-table, is a drawing that he fondles as a child its doll.

"See, how delicious it is! It's an Ingres. A sketch for the portrait of Madame —. She is dead, peace be to her ashes, leaving a goodly posterity, among others a grandson who is a Municipal councillor. The dreadful fellow—a reactionary—had the most entrancing of grandmothers. Isn't it a masterpiece? Prouté found it for me, for two thousand francs. The darling is in undress uniform, you see. Ingres was a man of principle. When he took palette in hand, he would say to his model (if she was a woman: with a man he went roundly to work): 'Off with those veils, my dear. The nude is the touchstone of art. I am going to make a masterpiece and propose to begin by a thorough, academic study. Off with shawl and dress and skirt and lies, and long live nature!'

He shows me the drawing.

"You see, the little lady was docile. She realized what great art means. There's no resisting genius. How

charming she is, rolled up, languid and shivery, on the swan's-head sofa, with nothing but her ostrich-feather cape.

"Her middle-class modesty has taken refuge, like a nymph surprised, in the extreme tip of her little person. With her pretty bare feet, one toe stuck up aggressively like a snake's head, she rumples her shift and scarf and stays. What modesty in her immodesty! What abandoned restraint! It is in its absence that the bashfulness of virgins and matrons is made visible.

" 'O cruel, cruel nature  
That such a flower should not last.'

The cockchafer that chafed the cup of such a flower was not to be pitied!

"Admirable man, old Ingres. One of the ancients, a man of marble. If I put myself in his place, I feel how much a brilliant exhibition would have fascinated and dazzled me. I should have muddled my colours on the palette and lost my brushes. I should have seen red, or at least pink. But the Citizen King's Raphael was master of himself, indeed almost insultingly so for the model. The man of Montauban drew the mounts and valleys of this miraculous female landscape as if he were making a draughtsman's plan. His pencil does not tremble. You think perhaps that he will stop, fascinated like St. Paul and caught up to the third heaven? (Forgive the sacred and unexpected comparison.) No: for he saw the like every week. Many and many were the portraits he painted, a hundred francs a piece. Observe the arrow in the margin. That's a *manchette*, what printers call a 'side note,' literally a wristband. Whence came, doubtless, the legend of Buffon's wristbands. That sounding rhetorician did not, I wager, write in lace wristbands, but like your humble servant worked on his

proofs with many an erasure and a correction, that give rise to the story of the Man in Wristbands.

"Do you see to what the scrupulous Dominique's arrow refers? To the loveliest target, the capital point! And in that little circle, the note: 'Blonde.' Blonde! Blonde! The nymph was to be painted in her attire. The picture was destined for a discreet family gallery. Then what mattered those locks? Much, my friend, much! There is a secret harmony between all the parts of the body, a mathematic, chromatic relation between the navel of a goldilocks and the tip of her nose. It was that he might always bear the fact in mind that the illustrious painter made this special study. Far better, wasn't it, than to have tied a knot in his handkerchief or to have made a ring of paint on the edge of his palette. I was unjust to him, though, for there is much emotion in the thoroughness of his drawing. It is no larger than a finger, but it is a pool of voluptuousness. M. Ingres hid his little game. Oh, the cunning man of genius. He was a stout fellow, but one who knew how to hold himself in.

"Where shall I put the little lady? What a dreary room this is, vaguely Louis XIII with its fourposter and mantelpiece all columns. It's Madame who has condemned me to the Middle Ages and Louis XIII. She has kept all the pleasant epochs for herself—Louis XV, Louis XVI, and the Directory. I've a good mind to make a revolution, waving aloft my little blonde darling for a banner! But I shall take good care not to. Madame is jealous, even of women in pictures! Menad that she is, she would tear my lovely drawing to pieces."

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*ROBERT D'ARBISSEL*

"Imagine you had surprised me at dusk entering a place of bad repute. What would you have thought?"

"I am a man and nothing that is human——"

"O rash young judge! In the age of faith, in Spain, Italy, France, you might pay frequent visits to the brothel out of charity or piety. There were exemplary Christians who, to save a soul from perdition, chose wives from among the flock of lost sheep. If we may believe Brantôme such marriages had their advantages. Whatever happened, no one would believe the husband cuckold. Could what was done for the greater glory of God be turned to opprobrium?"

"There is a noble example in the life of the blessed Robert d'Arbissel, founder of the royal abbey of Fontevault. He was an apostle devoted to the pursuit of lost sheep and, like the good shepherd, neglected the unimaginative flock, who ruminate their beads and quit not the pasture of the godly. He put his whole back into the search for those vestals who are not virgin. Richly attired he haunted houses of pleasure, where he—good saint!—was taken for a knight on the spree. The girls invented endless ways to tickle him. And he played up well; indeed he entered into the fiction as thoroughly as possible. Unluckily, there are several lacunæ in the sacred text, for I invent nothing—I can give you all the references. Thus it is not stated how he chose the sheep out of the flock. Would he take the fairest or her at least that pleased him most? Or would he, by way of mortification, save the ugliest from hell? I incline to the former theory. Beauty is an attribute of the deity, and we are made in God's image. A well-curved back, a noble bosom proclaims the glory of the creator more eloquently than the powerfulest sermon.

“Nor does the pious chronicler relate the precise moment of conversion. When did Robert d'Arbissel pass from lover to missionary? Before? During? After? These are essential points that the clumsy monkish scribe considered negligible. He was totally lacking in the historic sense. However that may be, the blessed Robert was one day—or may be one night—so pressing, so warm, so eloquent, he so ejaculated grace that the whole house of ill-fame was converted, proprietress, manageress, housekeeper and all. They fell all together at the saint's feet, so many weeping and repentant Magdalenes, and swore never for the rest of their lives again to practise so infamous a trade but to devote themselves to God.

“The saint welcomed their repentance with great joy. The house of debauch should become a house of prayer, a change to which indeed the arrangement of the house lent itself, for nothing more resembles a convent than a brothel. In both are railings and peepholes and barriers and shutters. In both the life of the inhabitants is uniform and governed by strict rule. For instance, in both they owe obedience to their superiors. In both their time is passed in work and in meditation. In neither does the profit derived from work go personally to them.

“As the saint of the house of call prepared to cut the repentant sinners' hair and to put on them the holy habits of nuns, the manageress took the liberty to remark :

“ ‘Blessed father, I do not wish to go back upon our word. Henceforward, this house of scandal shall be a mirror of edification. But as the one who has charge of the purse, its incomings and its outgoings, I must say that this has not been a good year. Forgive me, O saintly man, if I still speak according to our ancient ways. We have had but few visits, and those visitors neither ardent nor generous. Maybe our girls lack experience.

They are yet young and know not how to attack the source of wealth. Howsoever it may be, we owe much money in the neighbourhood—so much to the baker, so much to the butcher, and to the wine merchant, and to the pastrycook, and to the apothecary. Then there is the flowershop, for the chaplets of roses that we bind on our unworthy foreheads; the hairdresser who devised cunning arrangements for our locks; the fiddler who taught us new dances and songs. And others that I mind me not of now. We are leaving this world: but have we the right to leave in difficulties those who gave us credit? Can one attain salvation without paying one's debts?'

"For long the saint immersed himself in his orisons. Then having consulted the voice of heaven he decided: 'You are in the right, good woman. Debts must be paid. God will accord you an extension of time. How long will you need, resuming your old trade, to liquidate the situation?'

"'Six months, most holy father, that is to say, if the young ladies do their best.'

"'Good, I give you six months.'

"The young ladies did their best. At the end of six months all the debts had been paid. Then Robert d'Arbissel purified the house and drove out the demons with the aid of his sprinkler. As you know, the devil and his assistants cannot bear holy water: one drop produces on them the effect of boiling water, for these infernal beings have a highly sensitive skin. The house once purified, its sign was changed. Instead of the red lantern, was suspended the image of the Queen of all virgins. And where once bloomed the roses of voluptuousness, there now smiled the egplantine of penitence."

\* \* \* \* \*

## ON BERGERET, ZOLA AND OHNET

“Such things only happen to me. When I was critic on the *Temps* I was lavish of flowers and niggard with the thorns. I never took sides. Such criticism is deadly to write. I used to put it off from day to day, like the poena that the schoolboy puts off till the last possible hour. I used to manage by the aid of a few generalities. Anyone who has read a certain amount has a rule to measure up a contemporary author. Usually he emerges from the process somewhat humiliated, even reformed sometimes. But I would tie an infinity of nice epithets, by way of ribbons, on my rule—or if you prefer, my ruler. It is with epithets, my child, that you will make your way. Always have a good stock in hand.

“Why, I have no idea, but one day I set out to belabour Georges Ohnet. It was the fashion in those days. Every fair must have its Aunt Sally, and every literary generation its Turk’s head. But of what really did we accuse him? His vulgarity? His bad style? Alas, they have been surpassed since: Q. and J., and X., and Z. have all been my brethren in the Academy! No, truth to tell, Ohnet’s unforgivable sin was his success. All the concierges, people said, were for him; and he who has the concierge has the whole house. The concierge is a sort of calumny—and of fame. What, my child, is Clio, the muse of history, but a concierge? She pulls the cord of posterity’s door.

“Georges Ohnet used to sell by the twenty, thirty, forty, fifty thousand. His sales swelled like an avalanche and overwhelmed all the neatly trimmed little literary gardens. Above fifty thousand a success is always scandalous. So I sharpened my pen and pierced Ohnet through and through. Much harm it did him! I met him once at the Salon and was introduced to him. I

didn't know where to hide myself. But he showered bouquets on me. He praised my critical sagacity. 'You have the ear of the public,' he said. In reality it was my ears he was pulling, and I almost begged his pardon. Between ourselves *Le Maître de Forges* is Paul Bourget, only more amusing. If Georges Ohnet had dealt in politics and piety and emptied his washhand-basin into the holy-water vessel, he would have been in the Academy.

"Another time I slashed at Zola. Ah, but then I was sincere—that was off my own bat! We made it up afterwards. It was I who buried Zola. I cried to all the world: Zola is a pattern of citizens! A great citizen, yes. But a great writer? That's quite another pair of shoes.

"I buried him under stacks of flowers. Peace be with him and with his pen dipped in the midden. Zola a writer? Come now. Recite me one page, one line of this enchanter. What, in all his work, not one floweret? It's a sewer! To read him, you must hold your nose, burn sugar, and put on your gloves. What are his novels about? Love. But there are ways and ways of making love. His characters in love are dog and bitch simply. Besides, there are other things than lovemaking. People must eat, walk, and sleep. The bow is not strung all the time. Was he such a Hercules himself, as to have his always bent?

"And he is not even piggish. The will to be a pig suffices not. He is just fit for a primary school, and all his social hotchpotch might be set forth in moral posters for villages. Yes, coloured lithographs for evening schools! You know the hideous pictures with which classrooms are defiled, as if, without them, those caves of wisdom would be too attractive. Posters in several chapters, stuck upon the whitewashed walls, show, above, the father sacrificing his weekly pay on the altar of the



drinking-saloon. Below, he is in hospital with cancer of the liver. His wife is mad. His daughter is in the gutter. His son is a convict. How nice for the little boys whose fathers take a glass now and then ! It must warm them up to see at once, dear little chaps, whither the road of life will lead them, between two gendarmes.

" True, there are other pictures. On the history of France and on botany : ' The Battle of Tolbiac ', and ' Wheat Cultivation.' Battles are easy, of course : neither the painter nor the children have ever seen one. Any sort of a jumble does. But in Beauce, wheat cultivation pictured for children who have never seen anything else from the day of their birth ! And in the Gironde they stick up descriptions of wine-making ! Our republic has achieved senility in its cradle.

" No, I have not done with Zola. You can be a vulgar writer and inclined to imaginings of the farmyard, and still have a stout, honest heart. But what do you say to this scavenger, this would-be Academician, who follows the holy processions at Lourdes and hangs his sewerman's books as a votive offering at the Grotto ? "

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### *SIMS' THREE PASSIONS*

He has shut his door to all the world : we are revising the MS. of the lectures on Rabelais. MS. ? Scrawls, references, and quotations on the back of envelopes, bills, visiting-cards and announcements of marriages and deaths. The front-door bell rings ceaselessly.

" Sir, it's X——, the Cabinet Minister ! "

" Tell him to go and have a crisis somewhere else."

" Sir, it's Princess—— ! "

" Let her go and do likewise."

" Sir, it's Q——, the publisher ! "

"Let him leave me in private."

"Sir, it's the painter Y——!"

"Let him sit elsewhere."

Emboldened by so many refusals Josephine, without referring to the Master, shuts the door on a secondhand bookseller whose breath smells strongly of wine.

"He had a bottle in each pocket, the drunkard."

"Monstrous wretch! It's my good Sims. I am always at home to Sims. You are an old idiot!"

"But he had more than he could carry!"

"Yes, more learning! Sims knows sixteenth-century books better than anyone. Before breakfast he can stand up to the *Académie Française*!"

"But he's so tipsy, he couldn't get up the steps!"

"And when he's tipsy, he can stand up to the whole Institute!"

Cheered by so much wine, France runs to the window, opens it, leans out, and supplicates with voice and arms that resemble a windmill in a storm:

"Sims! My good Sims! Noble fellow! I'm at home. This female without beauty or wisdom took you for a publisher or a Minister! Forgive her. Come up, here's the key."

He throws him the bunch of keys and rubs his hands, enchanted at the interruption:

"Away with Rabelais! Sims, I feel sure, has brought me some unpublished material on the priest of Meudon. He's the foremost bookseller in Paris, nay, in all France! A trifle odd in his appearance. Seem not to notice it."

Sims is Scotch or Irish—I forget which. Like all great philosophers, he attaches little importance to externals. He puts on his clothes of a morning in the order in which he finds them on the floor. Sometimes it's overcoat first, then shirt, then vest. People ridicule him, but why?

There is a mathematical rule which says that the order of the parts may be changed, nevertheless the whole remains the same. Sims has three passions : wine, books, and chess.

Has he really three passions? No. He hunts rare books, to satisfy the two others. When he has had a good day, he locks up his shop, seeks a neighbour as expert as himself at moving pawns and pulling corks, and, in his bookshop in the Rue des Beaux Arts, gives battle, the chessboard on his knees and a hamper of burgundy between his feet. The battle may rage for as much as three days. And while it lasts, Nam, the bibliophile, may beat in vain on the door and in vain address vehement imprecations to Heaven. Sims plays, and drinks, methodically. Every five minutes, a move ; every five minutes, a glass. And, O miracle ! the more he drinks, the more lucid he becomes.

Anatole France falls on Sims' neck.

" How glad I am to see you ! Sit down there by the fire. Are you loaded with good things ? " And there-upon feels the other's pockets.

The bookseller raises a lament in a vinous voice, weeping with eyes and nose : you might imagine a swarm of stupid flies buzzing round his mouth as about the bung-hole of a barrel. He is a little, old, dirty wretch, twisted like a screw : his greasy moustaches are a corkscrew. Wrapped in a piece of cloth he has several folio volumes, which he undoes, while bemoaning his sad old age. In former days he could carry a whole library stowed about his person without so much as feeling it. Now, four folios give him a hernia. The same thing with wine : then, four bottles only gave him an appetite, whereas to-day two make him yawn. He has a dreadful cold and can't think where all the water in his head comes from, for he never drinks any.

"Where did you find that, my good Sims?"

"I came on a lot of books," explains Sims in an English stage voice, "in the sale-room, that nobody wanted. Jurisprudence and theology. Queer, how people laugh at the science of God nowadays. *Acta Sanctorum* and Histories of Councils end by selling—but to make boxes out of them. For want of room I put all the rubbish in my bedroom, a little attic of a place under the roof. In order to find room to sleep, I had to put my head out of a window, in the gutter, and it rained all night. Luckily I had had a good time and was ripe, as you French say. The wine saved me, but it must be like that I caught cold."

"In this sea of uncertainty that we call the world, my dear Sims, I see a ray of certitude. You are a victim of the *Acta Sanctorum*. Because you gave up your bed to the saints you sneeze like Vesuvius and weep like a spout. But think of your presumption! To offer your bedroom to the blessed! Now, if it had only been the virgins or the angels!"

Sims ends by completely disentangling his folio. It is a polyglot Bible, a magnificent copy in green morocco, finely tooled. M. Bergeret makes a face.

"But the copy has Mirabeau's arms. Look."

The wind changes.

"True! So it has! Mirabeau's arms. Mirabeau had a great knowledge of the Bible. Perhaps this was the copy he used, who knows? How much do you want for it, my good Sims?"

"Fifteen hundred francs."

"Fifteen hundred francs! It's highway robbery!"

"If you think it too dear, don't buy it, and I'll take it to B."

"Well, you must admit that fifteen hundred francs is a stiff price. A Bible! Who on earth reads the Bible

nowadays but Huguenots? True, it's Mirabeau's Bible. It has his arms. That's what gives it value. Beyond doubt, this book has been searched for savoury and impertinent glosses."

He turns the leaves of the magnificent Bible.

He is loud in praise of Mirabeau, of Sims, of himself. His memory is excellent.

"It is undoubtedly the illustrious orator's copy. Perhaps there are his notes in it."

He hands over the fifteen hundred francs with enthusiasm. All day he will talk of the Bible and of Mirabeau.

\* \* \* \* \*

### THE ANTIQUE

"The other day, my friend, I had a vision of antiquity. I had passed the day with Montesquiou at Versailles. He had taken me to the tomb of Ituri and had opened the gates of his memory and of his heart. I was crossing the park when, at the *Patte d'Oie*, I fell into ecstasy at the sight of a group of young men, very lovely and nearly unclad, who were engaged in I know not what athletic rite. They were silent and grave. Have you ever remarked the gravity of youth? Only old men are puerile. These boys dressed in coloured rags held in their hands bats such as were used in the days when 'short' tennis was played. In the darkness of the wood their young flesh gleamed like a flower. There was but one blot on the picture; a priest looking after them. It must have been some religious institution. The hideous soutane threw a jet of sepia on an arabesque as of Anacreon. Why does the Church insist on clothing with



that sombre uniform those who have the word of eternal life ! It was a Quatre-bras brother, ludicrously bonneted like Punch and his fellows, who taught me the catechism. An opera dancer in tights and short skirt might have produced a better effect ! ”

\* \* \* \* \*

### *MICHAEL ANGELO'S STRING*

He has bought a new reliquary. In the holy vessel supported by an angel is a scrap of string, before which he is in ecstasy.

“ Is it a bit of hangman's cord, my dear Master ? ”

“ Be respectful, my child. It is Michael Angelo's string.”

“ Michael Angelo's string ! ”

“ Last year at Rome Boni said to me : ‘ Would you like to see Michael Angelo's Last Judgment, Prophets, and Sybils face to face ? The frescoes of the Sistine Chapel are being restored. They were painted on a wall of chalky brick which decays like bad teeth, and with the aid of subtle tools, like a dentist's, the decayed brick is extracted and cement is poured in. The frescoes are being stopped.’ ”

“ We climbed to the top of giddy scaffolding. I felt the dizziness of the height. I felt the dizziness, far more terrible, of Michael Angelo. He gave birth to giants. His figures are ten times the size of life. The breast of that woman is a mountain. How did he manage to paint in fresco on that surface, and without retouching, those colossal masses ? He must have thrown the colour on by the bucket full. Indeed, the tints, that from below

are so full of nuances, are flat and unmelting, seen near to. Then he bounded them like the Chinese with rings of blue and red and violet. What brushes did he employ? Brooms? No matter. That man equalled God.

"As we went down the trembling ladders I saw that scrap of string hanging on a nail on the wall. I culled it piously and put it in my pocket. I saw a mocking light in Boni's eye. At the bottom he suggested going to see the Confession of St. Peter.

" 'What, you refuse? I thought you seemed interested in relics!'

" 'I am interested in them. I believe in human feeling, in the fire of genius, and in the ardour of devotion. If this scrap of string served Michael Angelo to make measurements for his dream, I will attach myself to it as to a cord. And the giant will drag me along with him in his wild imagining.'

"I have at home the contents of a catacomb, almost, saved from the antiquaries. Be sure that I will never submit those heaps of broken bones to an anatomist. What literature they would make! There are the two heads of Monsieur St. Denis, and the eight legs of St. Catherine. Then I have enough wood of the Cross—cyprus, olive, laurel, plane: a veritable patchwork masterpiece—to heat a hundred barrack-rooms for a hundred winters. But before these trifles men have prayed and men have hoped. Untrue history has begotten true dreams."

\* \* \* \* \*

### THE LEAN KINE

"She made me a scene yesterday. You know they are in serious difficulties. Her husband has a mania for speculation and loses every time he plays the markets.

He has been badly nipped in copper. She explained all their accounts to me—as if I understand anything about them. But the moral was:—I ought to contribute. I objected sweetly: ‘And your son, Madame, does he contribute?’ From accounts we passed to tragedy. She rose, draped herself like a heroine of Corneille, and answered me: ‘It is on your account!’ I was thunder-struck, and fled.

“It’s intolerable, my friend. They have eighty thousand francs a year and spend double. Of course it can’t last, and she won’t do the only possible thing, which would be to go and live on her place in the country and eat her own chickens. No! She must throne it and have brilliant, astounding receptions. She lives in grand style and then the dry-cleaner or the pastrycook runs after her in the street with his bill. The latter artist stopped me, innocent me, the other day, in the Avenue de la Grande Armée, and bemoaned all his unpaid ices and distressful cakes.

“‘Your cakes and your rout-cakes! And what have they to do with me, pray?’

“The rascal had the impudence to answer:

“‘You’ve eaten a good many of them anyway.’

“No, this can’t go on. It’s intolerable. Quarrels at home and quarrels in the street. It’s high time that we should set sail for the New World.”

\* \* \* \* \*

#### VERLAINE

“I knew Verlaine at Nina de Calias’. Not at all! She was a perfectly good woman, an excellent person, a kind of literary muse or a Maecenas in petticoats. She was the owner of a little detached house in the Rue des Moines at Epinettes. At that time Epinettes was at the

very extremity of Paris. Her house was a table d'hôte, gratis, for poets and bohemians. She was herself something of a bohemian. Everything, at Nina de Calias', was in perfect bad taste: large, fat armchairs, curtains with silk balls on them, and Venetian glass chandeliers. A great deal of display, and not very much to eat. When one hadn't anywhere better to go, one could always climb up to Epinettes. And there was always good company there: Villiers de l'Isle Adam, Verlaine, Mendès, Charles Cros. I was coming back one evening with Verlaine, staggering like Silenus. He said to me:

"'You won't desert me like this. I can't tell my right hand from my left, or white wine from red.'

"He hung on to my arm, and I dragged him as far as his garret.

"Verlaine is, in part, Choulette. After his conversion, it became the fashion to go and visit the psalm-singing old wine cask at the Trousseau Hospital where he used to intern himself when he could get hold of no more to drink. People were in raptures. A poet in hospital! Another link in the royal chain of tradition: Colletet, Gilbert, Hégésippe Moreau. So on visiting day, I went with Madame and a very rich American lady. Verlaine was as lively as a cricket, enthroned in bed, buttressed up with innumerable cushions, and covered with a cotton nightcap like *le roi d'Yvetot*. He recited the litanies of the holy Virgin with a mouth that stunk of absinthe. 'Mystic Rose,' 'Tower of David,' 'Tower of Ivory'! By way of an *ora pro nobis*, between the 'Ark of Alliance' and the 'House of Gold,' he interposed a fruity 'Cambronne!' The ladies offered him a bouquet of roses and orchids, and, to keep the flowers fresh, the poet put them in his *pot de chambre*."

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*THE LOVELY TRIPE WOMAN*

"Like everyone else, I have had my successes of the heart. Well, my child, the most ethereal of my sultanas was a tripe-woman. Yes, yes, a tripe woman! Her shop was in the Avenue d'Italie. I used to go there twice a week on Tuesdays and Saturdays, on my way to the French lesson I gave at the V—— school."

"You have been a professor, Master?"

"Not precisely. Tutor. One must live. I was just out of college."

"And what did you teach?"

"French literature and history. It was excellent experience. Lemaître said to me once: 'I have an advantage over you, my dear France; I have corrected numbers and numbers of exercises.' He always bore the mark of having wielded the ruler. He would take any amount of trouble to extirpate a graceful touch. I got my tutorship, by favour, at the age of twenty at the V—— school at Ivry. Its name had nothing to do with the classics, being the name of a soap manufacturer. The school took in the wards of the department of the Seine. My pupils were from nine to twelve years old—dreadful age! For the most part they were orphans, nerveless, trembling creatures, the children of alcoholic postmen and concierges, begotten between two pulls at the bell in a sordid garret without light or air. Going through some fable of La Fontaine the while, I often had the feeling that I was in a monkey cage. I pretended not to see the tricks of those over-precocious innocents, and conducted the lesson as for myself alone. But when some stray sheet covered with obscene images fluttered by chance on to my desk, what could I do? I called up the guilty wretch and showed him the drawing with a sneer. 'Poor little braggart! You wanted to show off your perversity to



your comrades, and instead you have only shown up your purity. Why, it's not in the least like that ! You have never seen anything of the sort ! If you want to retain a reputation for viciousness, keep your hands off such chimerical sketches. And I would tear up the paper in disgust. The monkey was mortified in the extreme. I assure you that was a better way than keeping the little rascals in, setting them poenas, and depriving them of pudding.

" On my way back from Ivry I used to find my sultana in her tripe shop. She was a widow. She was plump. She was clean. She had an Olympian serenity. We used to dine together."

" Did you eat the tripe ? "

" Oh, no. But the marble slabs of the shop looked like a chapel. It was there, I think, that my most fervent prayers were said. My sweet tripe woman had but one blot : her hands were chapped. It was a sad result of her trade. She offered me marriage, though not knowing very well what I did. To attract me she would say : ' You are so thin. Nothing makes you fat like tripe.' Who knows ? Perhaps I should have been a very happy tripe man. Now, don't go and tell this story, for goodness' sake. On account of the Academy, you know."

\* \* \* \* \*

#### BANVILLE

When I entered the garden of letters, it was the court of a madhouse. There was Flaubert, an epileptic ; Baudelaire, with aphasia ; Jules de Goncourt, a paralytic ; and others. The Muses had changed their brilliant tunics and their floating bands into strait-waistcoats. And, as if by a miracle, in the midst of these hypochondriacs, Banville the facile juggled with his gold mines.

His poetry was like a tight-rope act. He was full of health and innocence, and found life good, for nymphs danced round him, and he threw the arabesques of his fantasy over everything. I met him one evening on the footbridge of the Pont des Arts. He came towards me, crowned with jollity and with hand outstretched. I was rolling a cigarette.

“ ‘My dear France,’ he said, ‘if you go on crushing your tobacco so negligently, you will roll into the paper not only Nicot’s herb but the hapless passers-by, the shameless dogs, the Louvre and the Academy into the bargain, whose cupola evening gilds.’ ”

\* \* \* \*

#### TO THE BATH

Sunday. The Anatolian Vespers. A fine collection, and foreigners among them. Recitation of several choice fragments in front of the mantelpiece and then—then Anatole France profits by the applause to escape from the ring round him and join the Carmelite at the other end of the gallery. He curls himself into a ball beside her like a cat seeking warmth and caresses. He purrs ; he scratches himself frantically, first his head, then his legs. From her gilded throne, armed with her lorgnette, Madame watches him across the heads of her court. Suddenly the storm breaks. As shrill as a herring woman calling her catch, her voice cuts through the salon :

“ I do not know, Monsieur France, where you have been disporting yourself, nor what you have brought back with you. But what I see very plainly, is that you scratch yourself like a monkey in a way that makes my flesh creep. I shall send François to the Villa Said to tell Josephine to get a bath ready for you to-morrow morning, and to keep you in it for at least twenty minutes.”

And, with a tiny pause, she adds :  
 " A sulphur bath."

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### ANTIMILITARISM

A number of militant pacifists are being tried for issuing an antimilitarist poster and their counsel solicits Anatole France's evidence. The Master will go into the witness-box. He will make common cause with the accused. He will tell the jury : " What these poor fellows have written once, I have written a hundred times. Why am I not charged ? " The effect would be irresistible, and an acquittal certain.

But the Master receives the suggestion coldly.

" I shall certainly not put myself out for your clients. They are turbulent, illiterate little idiots, who profess antimilitarism for the sake of notoriety. I should like to know what business it is of theirs. They have been brought to book and a good thing, too. It will teach them to be more modest. Antimilitarism is still nothing but a curious opinion—a thesis for study, a laboratory experiment. It is a subject for free but quiet discussion among persons of good breeding without prejudice, a diversion for the witty. A member of the *Académie Française* like myself may indulge in it. Your clients are as ridiculous as if they plastered the walls with bills on theology or metaphysics."

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### HE SINGS THE PRAISES OF MARCEL SCHWOB

" These escaped prisoners of the ghetto form a curious study. They are diseases of the mind—monsters, in the etymological sense of the word, as being prodigies. There

are dropsies of the soul and eczemas and elephantiasis of the spirit. These sons of David and of old-clo' dealers have slept in the litters of history. Leprosies contracted there burst out on them. Schwob used to come of a morning, his pockets bulging with curious books and his memory with scandalous stories. He handed me out both of them, and offered me his works printed on precious and archaic vellum.

"By memory and learning he was a classic and a man of tradition; but by method he was an anarchist. Imagine a collector or a dealer in antiques, who covered his pictures with acid, to test the solidity of the colours, and unravelled his Gobelins to weigh the silk and wool. Schwob knew all languages. Yet despite this Babel and his ancestors who gabbled their jargon at every street-corner in Europe, he had a decent style. Too much inclined to arabesques, maybe: in him was a certain homesickness for labyrinthine meanderings.

"On the day when Emile Henry was executed, Marcel Schwob brought me an ode to the glory of the anarchist martyr. But I could not appreciate all its boldness; for it was in Greek."

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#### *THE MAID AND THE GIRDLE OF CHASTITY*

He has been to the Cluny Museum to examine a bronze statuette of Joan of Arc.

"It's a forgery. The statuette is certainly of the fifteenth century, but it's a St. George or a St. Michael on horseback. Someone has chiselled on the base: 'The Maid of Orleans.' It's a forger's signature. How much did the Mæcenas or the Rothschild who offered this national treasure to the museum pay for it? Fifteen or twenty thousand francs. It's worth at most fifteen

hundred. There is not a single authentic portrait of Joan of Arc. All those at the museum at Versailles and the Lannery collection at Arc are false or fudged. They are all archangels, disguised as maids. After all, there's no great difference between a maid and an archangel.

Do you know what I found in the maid's room at the Cluny? I give you a hundred, a thousand guesses if you like. Give it up right off. One step away from the holy girl and almost at her feet, a girdle of chastity! As if the maid had need of that piece of armour! Heaven had given her, as you know well, the power to quell desire. This was a miracle attested by her seneschal during the trial of her rehabilitation. Many a time had he lain down to sleep with her on the straw. She was a fine young woman: lovely breast, lovely hair, lovely complexion. And he was a great young lady-killer. Well, he confessed with humility to the fathers of the Church that he never felt the slightest desire.

"Coming then, to look at the Maid's statue, I stayed long in ecstasy before the girdle of chastity placed as a trophy at the feet of her horse. My son, I suspect that unique treasure of being a gross fraud. Consider wisely the merits of that historic mechanism. What sort of a muzzle is this? The honour of dames in those days was large. Moreover, there were locksmiths. There are those who make keys, and those who make false keys. Often they are the same. My opinion, if you want it, is that this girdle is not at all a girdle of chastity, but an orthopædic girdle, a poor hospital relic.

"Before the invention of spring or elastic bandages similar girdles of iron, padded with lint, were used. It's one of these girdles, and nothing to do with Venus, that newly married couples and commercial travellers and schoolboys on the spree go to contemplate at the feet



of the Maid. I told Haraucourt, the director of the museum, so.

“ ‘My poor France,’ said he raising his arms, ‘if I had to turn out of the museum everything that is false, there would only be myself left in it. People make the journey to Paris to see that girdle and speak of it with mystery on their return. It is an inexhaustible source of doubtful jests. It has been put on picture postcards. As well renounce Corsica or the Regent. It is a national jewel.’ ”

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### *THE HEART AND THE REASON*

This morning I am absent, and listen to the usual learned rhapsody without taking it in. He notices, and complains :

“ Where are your wits, my friend ? ”

“ At Sommières. I have had bad news of my nurse, my second mother, who gave life to a little orphan bird fallen out of the nest.”

“ You still love her ? ”

“ Indeed yes. She is the creature upon earth most indispensable to me. It was she who gave me the measure of my heart.”

“ That is not wise. Gently, but surely, you should rid yourself of this extravagant love. I, too, believed that my mother was indispensable to me, and I realized that every day she became more and more of a stranger. As I grew greater, she grew smaller. What was there in common, pray, between the lively, active, brilliant woman who presided over my childhood and her, so decrepit, vacillating and talkative, who obstructed my future ? Nature does what she does well. She ridicules our parents. She strikes them in the head, the legs,

the memory and the heart. She pushes them to be a caricature. If she preserved them in the fullness of their strength, we should never survive their loss. Oh yes, I seem to you monstrously ungrateful! You will come to it, you'll come to the same resignation. One supports one's parents fallen into second childhood up to the eightieth year. But after that, my friend, there are institutions. Who can live with them after that?

"You will say: 'But how if we reach the same age ourselves?' Ah, you must be very rich, a regular gilded statue.

"Very rich, and very egotistical, too, and very wandering in spirit. Besides, only egoists grow old."

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#### *A ROMAN INSULT*

A fiacre has run into a market gardener's cart at the Porte Maillot. Perhaps it happened the other way about. A slanging match ensues, like a duet from the drivers' seats, with an impassive policeman presiding. The tourney has something academic about it. A crowd listens in open-mouthed delight, and France keeps count of the insults with commentaries of his own. Finally the man of the country calls the man of the town—let us say, effeminate—a person of dubious morals. He supports this with the gratuitous assertion, which makes the onlookers rock with joy:

"Show us your rump! I wager its feathers are all plucked!"

France exults:

"Oh, my child, my child, what a lovely insult! I thought it was lost two thousand years ago! It's a classic! Even so at Rome, in the age of Catullus, did persons of the best society abuse one another!

“ Do you remember the scratch of the little Mantuan cat at a burgomaster of Padua, who had ravished a little blonde darling from him ?

“ ‘ Oh you, whose *podex* is as smooth as a salt-cellar ! ’ Doubtless the illusion was to a salt-cellar of silver or some other well-polished metal.”

\* \* \* \* \*

WE SHAN'T GO

“ See if you can cancel the tickets. Madame is very ill. She has been in bed and starving these two days. She is feverish. She has fits of delirium. Her husband has deserted her. Her son has a fit of the sulks. It would be cruel to abandon her. And why should I go to the Hurons ? I am no orator : I am a writer. I have nothing in common with Jaurès. I can only speak well about something that I know. Why do they want me to cross the ocean ? To listen to me like a new Orpheus ? To see me ? They must be children, these folk of the Argentine. They have great men shipped out to them and pay their weight in gold. They want to see them miserable and homesick, as we go to gaze at the giraffe or the wild asses at the Zoo. When I ask the lady who has organized these lectures : ‘ What am I to talk about ? ’ she answers : ‘ Whatever you like. It hasn’t the slightest consequence.’ It’s not the song but the canary that matters. What impertinence ! There are profitable countries, and profitless. The ancient peoples offer the traveller august ruins and their lessons. But the Argentine has only its money. Happy people, they have not yet even a hundred years of history.”

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*WE SHALL GO*

"Madame is better. The fever has fallen. She is reassured. After all, it's for her sake that I am going! It doesn't amuse me. I go to a people without a past. They fetch us, tenors and stars, like dancing bears or chimpanzees that play chess. But it's not a bad idea to see the other side of the world before dying. A change of country will bring about a change of prejudices perhaps. And then a voyage is an adventure. My annual pilgrimages in Italy with Madame were no longer voyages. At the same season of the year we took the same trains, crossed the same Alps, and went to the same hotels. We visited the same churches, the same curiosity shops, the same bookshops, and always returned two months later tired and disillusioned with our hands full of acquisitions. We went over the voyage again while unpacking and discussing where to put the Etruscan vase, bought at Verona, where the Roman Venus, and where the head of Ceres, carried off from Sicily under the nose of the Customs officers. Shall I tell you the truth, my friend? In the end this hunt for antiques is neither very amusing nor very profitable. You can find just the same things in Paris, and cheaper. But then, one must pass the time somehow; and without museums and churches and curiosities and bookshops, what should Madame and I have done? We should have ended by scratching each other's eyes out. My dear friend is resigned to staying in Paris this year. It is the first time for long. It will be a rest for her. And above all it will be a rest for me."

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*FLORA AND POMPEY*

Madame: "What a great softie that man is! He came the other day with his cheeks scratched and a

black eye. In the end he confessed: 'My mistress beats me.' He had the air of a child who had just been spanked."

"My dear friend, allow me to differ from you."

"What, do you let women beat you?"

"Ah, but so passing a triumph of frailty over force is not incompatible with a noble character. If we may believe Amyot, the fair Flora was in the habit of biting Pompey the Great."

"Where did she bite him? On the cheek?"

"Truth to tell, there are certain among the learned who accuse Plutarch's translator of having committed an error. They think that it was Pompey who used to bite Flora."

"An exchange of compliments!"

"Don't laugh, Madame! The question was the subject of a lively dispute between M. Costar, bachelor of the Sorbonne, and M. Girac, a Judge, at the time when Louis XIV was ravaging the Palatinate. The victories of the Sun King somewhat distracted public attention and the passage has never been elucidated, so that we are still ignorant whether Flora used to bite Pompey, or Pompey Flora. I have a mind to write to the Minister of Public Instruction, and ask him to have an official version drawn up. I hesitate to think of the danger that menaces the domestic peace of the French, if this point of history should remain obscure. Perhaps the best way would be to have two versions made, one for lads at college, the other for young ladies' schools. The latter would study Pompey's bites; the former, Flora's."

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#### *DON JUAN'S PENANCE*

The talk falls on Don Juan, whom a dramatist has once more made the subject of a play. Is it a good



subject? Has too much use been made of it? There is Molière. There is Mozart. Suddenly France jerks a question at Madame:

"Do you know Don Juan's end?"

The wind has been blowing somewhat bitter, and she answers a shade uneasily:

"No, and I am glad of it, for I shall learn something."

"Don Juan, then, was old——"

"Don Juan old? But the heart knows no wrinkles."

"The heart, no. But the face. Don Juan was of my age, Madame. And he was still a libertine."

"Like you!"

"Like me, if you will. At dusk he was wandering in a dark little street in Seville, when he heard a voice sigh: 'I love you. I adore you! Come!'"

"That doesn't sound a very new song."

"Everything is in the tone! So Don Juan sought whence came the sweet sound. He saw, in the obscurity, the form of a woman behind the grating over an aperture. A hand seized his, and he fell into the cellar."

"Into the cellar?"

"Yes, Madame. He stayed a hundred years with her! A hundred years a-lovemaking! A hundred years!"

"A hundred years—something of a feat that! But with whom? You forget the most interesting part of it."

"With death, Madame! With death! Now, what do you think of my story?"

"Extraordinarily uninteresting."

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#### OBITER

"Humanity marches on. No, it turns round and round, like a circus horse.

"There is no morality, but hygiene.

“We pass one half of our life in hopes, and the other half in regrets.”

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*DOWN WITH SPRING !*

April, and under a buffeted umbrella we go up the Avenue du Bois. A buffeted umbrella—mine, for the Master left his yesterday at the antiquary's or in the bookshop. He is not perturbed, for his umbrella, bought in Rome, near the Pantheon, is a fairy and will come back to him with the fine weather. Meanwhile, we share the drips under silk scintillating with the wet. M. Bergeret scintillates with anecdotes. We are in Florence in the time of the Medici, with the Humanists, the libertines, the sculptors, and the courtesans. But we are also in Paris, where it is pelting, and we slip along through the April rain, faceted by shafts of sunlight like a jewel. I murmur: “Rain and sun together. The devil's beating his wife, and giving his daughter in marriage.” But Anatole France is with Benvenuto in Florence and hears not.

Every second the sky changes, pale and bright by turns.

“Look, Master, at the lilac reflexion on the ground. Those houses look as if they were painted houses in Italy.”

But he is launched on one of his favourite hobbies.

“The fact is that the Church was quite right to sell indulgences. It was with the money-boxes of the imbeciles who bought them that the popes built the dome of St. Peter's. Who can defend Luther in Italy? If the Reformation had prospered there, tell me what would remain to us of the work of Michael Angelo, Raphael, and Leonardo?”

The wind turns our umbrella inside out. One of the ribs is broken. The lecture continues:

"Who, standing in front of Raphael's Transfiguration, can call himself a Huguenot and an enemy of images?"

A lull in the squall. In the midst of a lawn of young grass, a Japanese cherry-tree stands, laughing with all its coral flowerets.

"Master, bestow one smile on the generosity of this tree. It is so rosy and innocent that it makes you think of a naked baby dimpled all over. But two steps from smelly motors, gloomy policemen and yelping dogs, it holds out its arms, laden with flowers. It is the living image of spring."

The word "Spring" offends his learned ear. He halts on the shining asphalt and, armed with my dripping and exhausted umbrella, scrutinizes me with an unquiet eye.

"You believe in spring, my young friend? Spring exists only in books and pictures. Is it possible that your soul is romantic, like that of concierges and little shopgirls? The spring sings, indeed! No, my friend: it does not sing—it gives you colds and damp feet. It is we who sing, and our song is our desire for youth renewed. We see the leaves grow green again and we think to grow fresh like them. Because I have had my bedroom re-papered in green and pink, is that any reason why I should recover the verdure of my twentieth year? Illusion! Music and literature are full of that theme. Beware of such bravura. I had thought your mind firmer and freer. What has taken you, to coo like that this morning? Have you, perchance, been out on the spree? For look you, whatever the weather be, spring is a woman."

We have reached the corner of the avenue and, according to daily custom, enter a bric-à-brac shop. Such is the law of the Medes and Persians. Anatole France ferrets about. He will never leave the shop with empty hands: some spoil he must have, no matter what, be

it plate, snuff-box, print, or relic. He bargains over a lacquer box, of Chinese workmanship, encrusted with mother-of-pearl. He dwells on the grace and realism of the ornamentation.

"This branch of cherry-blossom might just have been plucked. It still drips with pearly drops from a shower and the sun smiles in them."

"It might have been plucked from the cherry-tree in the Avenue du Bois, Master."

"You think to mortify your old master, young man, and you only say a foolish thing. Here, the cherry branch is art, that is to say, a common and usual object glorified to all eternity by the sensibility of the artist, whereas there——"

"There it is the concierge."

"Precisely so."

\* \* \* \* \*

#### THE TWO REDS

"The Frenchman? Revolutionary and functionary in one. The red cap and the Legion of Honour."

\* \* \* \* \*

#### STYLE AND THE GRAMMARIAN

Proofs come from the *Revue de Paris*, slashed about with author's corrections. He is not astonished, and sighs :

"That's G——, who has devoted himself to the task of turning my unhappy prose into good style. He marks with red pencil my barbarisms, solecisms, improper terms, vicious constructions, faulty conjugations, in a most humiliating way that reminds me of a dictation for the *baccalauréat*. The strange thing is that G—— has never been able to get a single sentence of his own

going: he can only correct those of others. That is what seemingly distinguishes your true grammarian. His fundamental quality is impotence. Grammarians are umpires who never descend into the arena. They count the blows and mark the falls, but never stumble themselves. And they make me think of Rivarol's witticism: 'It is a great advantage never to have done anything, but one that should not be abused.' "

\* \* \* \* \*

*RUSKIN IN VENICE*

"John Ruskin? Yes, Madame and I met him in the Piazza at Venice."

A chorus of birdlings chirp:

"Oh, Master! Tell us about it! You and Ruskin in the Piazza! Oh, what an interview!"

"Moderate your transports, my dear little friends. I had not the honour personally to know the theorist of Beauty, but Madame adored him in those days. The hotel porter said to us: 'Do you want to see Ruskin?' He pronounced the name 'Rouquin,' being a German, like all Italian hotel-porters. 'Go to the Piazzetta. He has just gone there to feed the pigeons.' "

The chorus of birdlings:

"Ruskin! The pigeons! The campanile! How enchanting!"

"The pigeons, you know, are one of the ceremonies of Venice. While tourists throw crumbs to those winged beauties, photographers snap them. The result becomes a sort of votive offering, or a piece of artistic evidence brought back from the voyage. As it might be a tableau vivant of the blessed St. Francis of Assisi preaching to the birds. True, the actors, in covert-coats and water-



proofs, are not very distinguished ; but for a backcloth you have the campanile and St. Mark's and the sea. It looks so well in the album ! ”

“ But, Master, Ruskin ? You have forgotten Ruskin ! Did he feed the pigeons ? ”

“ No. No dove came to peck in his silver beard. He was standing in ecstasy before the stand of a little statuette-seller. All ancient and modern Olympus was spread out on the wobbly tray, in plaster. There was Leda thrilled by the swan's embrace, and there the three Graces ; here, Hercules and his club, Apollo and his lyre, Diana, Cupid, Venus ; there, Notre Dame de Lourdes, Napoleon, Christ, and the Pope.

“ The English æsthete breathed in with delight all this rubbish, Christian and pagan alike, I following attentively the while the quiverings of his powerful nose. Madame and I began to bet which of the gods or goddesses he would choose for his sacrifice. The old or the new dispensation ? Madame put her money on Hercules, naturally. I, on Venus. She held her kodak ready for the sensational moment when Ruskin should carry off the mother of the loves and the graces—What a document it would be !

“ Alas ! After having sniffed over all the plaster dolls, the apostle of Beauty discovered amidst the crowd of immortals an abominable statuette of a nigger, sitting in a wicker armchair, reading a newspaper and smoking a large cigar. He bought the nigger for three lire and carried it off pressed to his heart, in a brilliant cloud of Venetian pigeons. Madame did not press the button. What a pity ! Since that day she can't bear the name of Ruskin. A woman all over ! ”

\* \* \* \* \*

## GENIUS AND MADNESS

"Napoleon said to Pinel, his doctor :

" ' Between a genius and a madman, there is no more than the thickness of a two-sous piece.' "

" And he added :

" ' I must take care not to fall into your hands.' "

\* \* \* \* \*

## HAPPY MEDIOCRITY

*L'Ile des Pingouins* has just appeared. The reviews are excellent, and I congratulate him, but he receives my tribute sourly.

" Why praise an author when he produces something new ? " he sighed. " You would offer me condolences, not congratulations, little wretch, if you had any heart. This book is lost. It is no longer mine, but the public's—everyone's, anyone's. At birth we have in our sack a certain number of masterpieces. I say ' masterpieces ' out of mere modesty : it's the regular term in literature nowadays. Well, we must make hay while the sun shines. But the question is, how long will the fair season last ? I began late. Suppose it still lasts for me. Yes, yes, I know what you're going to say—that autumn fruit is the finest. I have served up such images, before you, to men of my present age, who had attained to the dignities of literature. My last book is a masterpiece, the best I have ever done, the apex of my pyramid. Well, if you love me, you should rend your garments and cover your head with ashes and let loose your lamentations. It is an irremediable loss to me. If I had written a poor book, it would have been another pair of shoes ; anyone can do something poor. But a masterpiece ! A masterpiece ! Consider this parable. From my good parents I have inherited a marvellous

service of plate, which hunger drives me to take, piece by piece, to the pawnshop. At last I come to the noble gilt soup tureen—you know, the tureen surmounted by an eagle with wings spread, that came from St. Helena. And you congratulate me? You have no bowels of compassion. No, no, don't make me out stupider than I am. I know what value to put on such congratulations!"

"You are famous, Master."

"Famous? That's to say, I am old. I have become a commonplace. I can't be stopped any longer, so they let me run on—down the staircase, and the farther I run down, the more they cry: 'What marvellous strength! See how he runs *up* the stairs!' Oh, I should like to give what for to all these impudent beggars—you, too."

For a moment he chews the cud of his ill humour. Then he takes me by the shoulders and, plunging his eyes into mine, cries in anguished tones:

"Come now, confess! It is not worth a button! But, between ourselves, it's good enough for these days."

"Oh, Master!"

"Genius? Yes, of course I have genius. But I'm like all geniuses. From time to time they fall far below themselves. It is only the mediocre that keeps its level."

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#### NO DESCRIPTIONS

"Hébrard is a tyrant, where his paper is concerned. This morning he lunched with M—— at Madame's. M—— is just off for a holiday and is to write a weekly letter in the *Temps*. 'Let me have really good stuff,' said Hébrard, embracing him, 'but, above all, my friend, no scenery, no descriptions!'"

\* \* \* \* \*

## A NATIONAL DOLL

On the way to Madame's, between twelve and two, he expends much ingenuity in finding subjects for homilies. This morning he has taken as his text a rubber doll, whose nudity is hideously exposed in the window of a bazaar. He examines it at length, pinches it, makes it squeak, and rejects it with disgust, to the stupefaction of the salesman, standing, feather-duster in hand, and hoping for an order.

As we stand on the pavement, the Master pours forth his indignation. We begin by a retrospective view of dolls throughout the ages, and sighs for radiant Tanagras. We end by imprecations against the republic.

"How can the Under-Secretary of State for the Fine Arts and the Minister of Education tolerate such crimes against æsthetics and morals? This doll, one of innumerable specimens, is a filthy thing. Yes, filthy, I repeat. It is supposed to represent someone of the fair sex, and it has no breasts! A woman without breasts, my friend, is like a bed without pillows, a couch without cushions, spring without roses, sausage without mustard.

"Look at the *coccyx*. The illustrious Michael Angelo, who was not much given to warmth for the sex—we know why Buonarotti took to such ultramontane byways—used to teach his disciples: 'You must draw the sacred bone. It is sublime!' What have they made of this sublimity here?"

He is in high wrath, and thumps the pavement with his umbrella. The shopman wonders if he had not better call the police.

"What have they made of this sublimity? A kind

of pad, as if to keep out the draught ! And the thighs ? Thighs, do I say ? Hams ! Hams of a young boar ! And the navel ! Heavens above ! Venus' conch is like a cup of castor oil. The arms are like sleeves and the backside hacked out with an axe. The poor thing hasn't even a neck : she looks as if she had been guillotined and her head stuck on again only with two or three vertebræ lacking. I won't speak of the face ; that matters so little ! I am not among those who are caught by the sign over the shop. Woman is an instrument of love, on which you only play well with closed eyes. But you must know the keys and the mouthpiece, and be able to run up the scale ! ”

The shopman offers to show him, inside, dolls with china heads of great value. But he is too deep in his philippic even to hear the suggestion.

“ These are the first images, my friend, that give us the criterion of love's pleasure. Do you see the danger ? Children have an image of woman presented to their eyes that is utterly ridiculous. Little girls can't be taken in by Punch because he is a caricature ; but little boys will be influenced all their lives by this mess of indiarubber. What an idea, too, to represent the body of woman in rubber, that same rubber that does duty for watering-hoses ! A doll like that is capable of perverting a whole district, and alas ! every bazaar is full of its like. Come, be frank : could you want to make love to a thing like that ?

“ You say that children don't think so much of that ? Poor babe ! They think only of that. They think of it without thinking of it. If you could see in the heart of those innocents, you would be terrified. It's a little slough. And that thing will be put in Zizi, and Lulu, and Toto's Christmas stocking, and into their bed and



arms and mouth ! And then folk wonder that Lulu and Zizi and Toto take the wrong turning !

" It's a German doll ! "

" I might have guessed it ! There is something metaphysical in the poor thing's backside, something Kantian. What a fine article I should write about it if I were Barrès or Déroulèdes ! You see the theme : the insidious Teuton, to render France sterile, mobilizes rubber dolls against her.

" Why now should we not create a national type, as Phidias did to make his statue of the mother of the gods ? The sculptor passed in review all the fairest Athenian women, and from one he took her loins, from another her belly, from a third her head, from a fourth her thigh. We could thus have an obligatory, republican doll that would be distributed broadcast in nurseries and schools and institutions, with a folio model for high schools. The stupidity of parents who spend their time in preventing their sons from having an exact idea of woman makes me laugh and cry at once. Why, good folks, your boys will never awake too soon to the call of love ! Without curiosity and without desire, there is no intelligence. Moreover, happily, what you hide, your children find. They ferret it out in a dictionary, a catechism, an atlas, a tapestry design, a scrap of newspaper ! "

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#### VICTOR HUGO'S CHARITY

At the gilded gates of the Parc Monceau, a drunken woman hiccups for alms. She is nothing but a bundle of filthy rags, clutching a baby to her raddled breast.

" She stinks of alcohol," says France disgustedly, as he moves away. But in walking he argues with himself.

“Clearly the creature inspires contempt rather than pity. She is dirty and, what is worse, her child is still dirtier. With her drunken milk it sucks in vice and epilepsy. But then she is a beggar, and can we, in return for a few coppers of charity, demand the fair civic qualities of sobriety and temperance? It is difficult enough to be virtuous when one is rich.”

He retraces his steps and puts half a franc into the infant's black fist. Then he continues his way and his reflexions.

“It is very hard to give alms—especially if one has a certain degree of fame and a reputation for humanitarianism to keep up. What did you think of me just now? Ah, I read into the depths of your heart. You judged me as we used to judge Victor Hugo. When I was your age, we used to follow him in a procession after his reception, where at the door beggars galore awaited him. It served the author of *Notre Dame de Paris* right. The poet ransacked his pockets and distributed what he had. If he gave two coppers we thought: ‘Old Skinflint!’ If he gave five francs we murmured ‘Beastly pride!’”

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#### SHYLOCK AND THE SEPARATION

“The Separation Law, at which we worked so hard, is an abortion. Aristide had repudiated the Church and sent her back to her heavenly father laden with rich gifts. But the Pope has refused the dowry and the poor law remains ineffective. More subtle than we, the Italians said: ‘We must kiss the Holy Father's feet and tie his hands!’ Our Cabinet Ministers spat upon the Pope's shoe and untied his hands, and they are astonished at getting smacky-smack, infantile creatures

that they are! All the trouble comes from lawyers. Instead of getting the help of a few bad priests—and, thank goodness, there is no lack of them!—we must needs go to a young Jewish luminary of the law. Shylock over again. Armed with the Bible and the Code, he did his best to tie up the Church in the stay-strings of legality. He wanted to cut off a pound of flesh from her buttocks. Not a fraction more, not a fraction less! A beefsteak which Israel has awaited for two thousand years! But our Holy Mother kicked out at the touch of the slightly too Rabbinical hand!

“Outside the Code and the Talmud this young legal luminary knew nothing. Literally nothing. Listen to this. Madame and I were at Venice and went into St. Mark’s, where we fell upon a troop of his female cousins, and he like a cock, ruddy of comb and Baedeker, in their midst. ‘Oh, Master, how dreadfully sad! You are entering this famous church just as we are going out! With you as a guide, what a profitable visit we should have had!’ ‘Well, never mind. Come with me. What would you like to see? Shall we begin with the sacristy?’

“Our luminary begins to stammer.

“‘The sacristy? Yes, we have seen that, Master. But we saw it badly on account of the priest in front of it.’

“‘A priest, in front of the sacristy?’

“‘And at the foot of the steps——’

“‘What steps?’

“‘The steps of the sacristy. There was a child ringing a bell.’

“‘A bell? Steps?’

“To put an end to this nonsense I said to him: ‘Take me to the sacristy.’ And our luminary, who is a Councillor of State and presides over the question of the Separation, led me straight to the high altar! The man who has weighed in his little juridico-Hebrew scales the fate of

thirty millions of Frenchmen and of thirty thousand churches does not even know a sacristy from an altar !  
'And now, be ye instructed, ye who judge the earth,'  
as Bénigne Bossuet said."

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*PIERRE LOTI'S MOSQUE*

"We stopped once with Pierre Loti at Rochefort. He had transformed the house into an Oriental bazaar. We had our noses—Madame and all of us—in our wash-hand-basins, when a gong sounded. 'That,' we were told, 'is for the hour of prayer. If you wish to go to the mosque, Monsieur Loti will expect you there. The gong takes the place of a muezzin. Monsieur Loti did think of building a minaret.'

"Curiosity rather than devotion took us to the mosque. It was a veritable mosque with Moorish columns, and arabesques, and latticed windows—only all in papier mâché, as though on the stage of the Opéra Comique. Conformably to custom we left our shoes at the door. On a divan Pierre Loti was enthroned, beturbaned and beskirted, like a pasha, and already the faithful were singing the praises of Allah and chanting litanies for their salvation, with many a dive and prostration and trembling of the arms and genuflexion—a very Swedish gymnastic form of prayer. On us, too, the mysticism began to work and mingled with the pious throng we were beginning to feel our souls touched by Islam, when Madame nudged me.

" 'Don't you recognize those two mamamouchis ? ' And she pointed to two lanky zealots who smote the tiles on the floor with their foreheads.

" 'No, Madame, I have not the honour to be acquainted with those two "dogs." ' "

“ ‘Fix your spectacles better. It’s François, my footman, and Jules, our chauffeur.’ ”

“ The astonishing part of it was not the masquerade. At Loti’s one spent the whole time in dressing up. But it was the propagandist virtue of the friend of *Mon Frère Yves*, who in a twinkling had converted the two servants. Loti was very persuasive with young men.’ ”

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#### THE AGE LIMIT

Someone has recommended to France a sub-prefect who is anxious to be promoted prefect. “ There is no time to lose,” his backer explains, “ for he is past forty. He is so intelligent, and such a good republican.”

France explodes :

“ ‘ Past forty, and a good republican ? The man must be an idiot ! ’ ”

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#### A MIDDLE-CLASS INVITATION

“ W—— came this morning to invite me to dinner, and was so good natured that I am going. Can you guess how he put it ? He said : ‘ My dear friend, you won’t make a bad meal, I promise you. My mother-in-law was once in service as a cook—a first-rate one, too—and for the occasion she will resume her place.’ ”

\* \* \* \* \*

#### SCANDAL

This morning I find the door open and, seated under a mediæval Madonna, Josephine weeping into a bowl of chocolate.

“ At last ! Here you are, and high time, too.”



She shows me the letters on a stool, at once stout-hearted and overwhelmed. She squares her shoulders, touches her forehead with an ironic finger, and points to the first floor, whence come shrill sounds. Then she gets up, leaving her tray on the stair, and chants her litany :

“ There’s no bearing of it longer ! She’s there since five o’clock this morning.”

“ Who is ? ”

“ Madame ! She’s still jealous at her age. It takes her sometimes in the middle of the night, and she dreams that he is playing tricks upon her. Then, at no matter what hour, she jumps out of bed, rings, routs out everyone, and comes to scold here. She searches the house, from cellar to garret, looks in the cupboards, pokes under the beds with her parasol. How can she get in such a state for a poor muddler, who’d be incapable of changing his drawers and his socks without me ! If I were to take a lover, I wouldn’t hunt out one with grey hair, I know.”

Josephine’s confidential remarks are pitched in a key of thunder. Whenever she begins to tell secrets, you may expect a storm. The folk come to the windows to listen. Now she positively yells :

“ There’s no bearing of it longer ! Not a day longer ! Here was I in bed, not yet daylight, when a ring comes at the door. Good, think I, some scamp of a drunkard, who’s mistaken his house. I don’t budge. The ringing begins again. And thumps on the door. So I open the window and look out. Glory be, it was Madame ! I popped on a skirt and went down to open for her, and can you guess what was all the thanks I got ? ‘ I thought you were dead ! ’ Dead ! I, who half kill myself in Monsieur France’s service here in the middle of all this piggishness and all these musty histories that give you the colic. Dead ! Dead ! And she’s not dead either.

But she'll kill Monsieur France. She went into his bedroom without knocking, tore the curtains open, knocked the chairs over, and they've been rowing ever since. What in the world can she want with him at this time o'clock? As if they hadn't got all their evening for quarrelling! Go in, it'll calm them. She'll behave herself when you're there perhaps."

The overheated room, stuffed with archaic furniture till it looks like the Cluny Museum, contains, amid its gilded Buddhas, Chinese pots and grotesques, angels, portraits bewigged or frosted, and relics, one poor relic of sorrowful antiquity but alive and groaning. Madame has fallen on to a seat beside the Louis XIII mantelpiece, her fur coat hanging open, and disclosing under it a wadded blue flannel dressing-gown with light blue facings.

For the first time I see her without paint or powder or arrogance. She had rushed hither, an Amazon without her cuirass. Marvellously clear and childlike eyes, looking out from the ravaged countenance, watch the logs burning. He, by the window, drums an agitated tattoo on the pane, apparently absorbed in the manoeuvres of some workmen cleaning the face of a house across the alley. High upon their scaffolding the painters whistle and sing, and their brushes follow the song. Madame takes no notice of my bow. I can hardly step forward, and feel an oppression as of a mortuary chamber. Letters and papers lie scattered on the Persian carpet pell-mell with the socks and braces. A little ball of gold hanging from a Louis Philippe watchstand strikes the hour with the click-click of a turnspit. The mechanical sound seems linked with the rare gestures of the woman sighing by the cinders, and I am invincibly reminded of those automatic puppets at fairs that imitate life with the aid of rustic, badly oiled springs.

Suddenly Madame raises her head, sees me, gathers

her cloak round her and drapes it with a coquettish shiver. She pats the curls of her wig, and sighs :

“ It’s as cold as ice here.”

Then without transition, her eyes in tears and a smile on her lips :

“ Answer frankly, do I look like a woman who likes making scandal ? ”

“ Nothing worse than that caused by getting up very early, Madame.”

“ I beg you to be frank. I have not come here at this time of the morning for nonsensical compliments.

“ Monsieur France is going to the New World, and you are going with him. What does he want, on the other side of the globe ? He certainly does not lack reasons to put forward, for he has already given me three—two too many. He is going for curiosity, he is going on his own account, he is going on my account. On my account ! Then why can’t I go with him ? Together, we have been all over Europe ; visited all its museums and sanctuaries. Everywhere we have been greeted with enthusiasm and respect. Our liaison is a thing known and accepted in the world of literature. Honest folk of all countries recognize such elective affinities. I have overstepped middle-class prejudices. I dominate them. In Italian hotels, at Rome for example, we inscribe on the register : Monsieur and Madame Anatole France. And no one is scandalized. Ambassadors and Consuls rush to the station to welcome us : they would carry my trunk if I let them. At Constantinople we lunched with M. Constant and I sat on his right hand. I have crossed the threshold of the Sublime Porte without blenching. And now Monsieur France is off to the Hurons and these loin-cloth’d savages would be shocked—or so he says ! People write to me—he gets them to write : ‘ You cannot accompany him to South America. The

Brazilians and the Argentines are most Catholic.' But I am a Catholic, too! I am Catholic in Rome and Protestant in Berlin. I offend nobody's faith; I conform to the usages. And he—is he a Catholic? No! We'll go to Mass together and communicate and keep Easter together."

She laughs with a spasmodic, convulsive laugh, then seizes the tongs and tortures the hissing logs, filling the room with smoke. The workman on his scaffolding whistles the *Matchiche*. M. France in a negligent voice recalls that in the *Dictionnaire Philosophique* is an exhaustive article on scandal. Josephine comes with the chocolate and there is a moment of calm; the window is opened so that we may not be smoked like fish.

Josephine is got out again only with difficulty. Under pretence of brushing the clothes, she wants to enjoy the show, and turns them endlessly this way and that.

"Go and beat those rags in the garden," says Madame in Olympian tones. "You are shaking all the dust under our noses."

The moment the maid is gone, Madame resumes:

"This voyage to Buenos Ayres has already caused too much talk. People are not ashamed to say that he is running away from me. I am not a woman to lose her head, or the game. Understand this, please: if he leaves me here, I shall know everything he does, day by day, from François, my manservant, who shall accompany you."

"François?" groans France, struck down by this announcement. "But he is so useful to you, my dear friend—I should be in despair if your faithful servitor——"

"It is because he is faithful that I am going to tell him to watch over you. You need to be watched over. You are a great man, that's to say, a wretched man incapable of buttoning your own boots and trousers.

You positively drown yourself in handkerchiefs and ties. These savages are strictness itself in the matter of ties and dinner-jackets. And your secretary from Languedoc, learned though he may be, is not much stronger than you in the customs of good society. What is an Immortal, an Academician, without a valet ? I am generous enough to give you mine. You should thank me. I render you the service of saving you from ridicule, and you draw a face an ell long."

An acid cough. Then :

"Take your breakfast, pray. I have a good deal more to talk of, and I hear your stomach gurgling from where I sit. Yes, François shall accompany you. He will write all your doings to me. Chateaubriand's valet who went with him to the Holy Land left a diary, that has been published for bibliophiles. Some day François' diary will be published !"

With a sudden change of tone, she becomes motherly again, rises, pushes a table forward, installs M. France before his bowl of chocolate, sticks the corner of a napkin inside his vest, breaks his toast, and tastes the liquid with the tip of the spoon.

"There, it's just right now. Come, eat. When I see you, my poor friend, so timid and awkward and easy to be led, I tremble to think of your embarking on such an obscure adventure."

She weeps.

"Have your places on the boat been taken ? What places ? You have a contract ? You have signed it without reading it, as always ! Well, has the contract any clause about scandal ? Is there a veto against my going with you ? The impudence of it ! They have made you believe that the other hemisphere has its eyes fixed on the best of your friends ? Come, have a little sense."

I throw myself into the breach.



"The places are taken, Madame, on the *Amazon*—two cabins de luxe. I will willingly let you have mine. I am not going with any enthusiasm. I know well what I am leaving here, and I do not see what I shall gain there."

She interrupts dryly :

"I know young men and even men of letters who would envy you your place. To travel with M. France——!"

"Pardon me, Madame," I continue with gentle obstinacy, "I have no ambitions. Rather such ambitions as I have are moderate. My young Argentine pupils, my bibliographical researches for learned persons, and my work for the *Action* and various foreign papers is more than enough for me to live happy. My life is obscure, but leisurely, and my feeling on quitting the modest sphere I have described for chimerical projects are those of anxiety. I am a stay-at-home. I shrink from travel. Take my place, Madame, and I will bless you eternally."

France, wiping his moustaches, protests.

"But I need Brousson! I am going to lecture! I shall have to speak in public, and you have told me a thousand times, my sweetest friend, that a writer like me knows nothing about speaking. I shall read my Rabelais. I read well enough. But at every stopping-place of the ship reporters and interviewers and photographers and autograph hunters and dedication fiends will fall on me. I must have someone to warn me, recall their names, spot the local celebrities, prepare extempore remarks. Will your François be capable of dusting up my speeches with his duster?"

"I will do it."

"It is impossible, my dear friend. Inquire of the Minister of the Argentine, and he will tell you so. Over there they don't admit liaisons, literary or sentimental.

They are brutes and savages who stick to their catechism. For myself I should be enchanted if you came with me. Are you not my guardian angel? But we should risk having rotten eggs thrown at us, or bananas, or pine-apples. I don't know what they eat in those countries. And I don't know either why the deuce I am going there! But I have signed the contract."

The workman, perched aloft, sings:

"I call her my own, my girl,  
My little Tonki—Tonki—Tonkin girl;  
She is sweet and she is winning,  
She's like a bird that don't stop singing——"

At this, Madame bursts out in the tones of a tragic actress and in a long speech delivers, so to speak, an account, strict and pitiless, of all she has suffered during twenty years. I try to mediate:

"Madame, the workmen on the scaffolding there see and hear everything as if they were at the play."

She leaps to the window and dashes it open with a hand so indignant, so feverish, that the glass is shattered.

"Let all the world hear me!" she cries like a Fury, leaning on the window-sill and framed by the astonished curtains. "Let all the world hear me. That man there is the most despicable of . . .!"

He catches at the insulting word, as if the fish were a butterfly, descants on it, juggles with it, makes ironic play with it:

"Why is this fish so calumniated? There is none more coloured, more brilliant, more graceful. It is, amid the salt waves, what the peacock is to the farmyard."

The badinage ends unexpectedly enough, with the fish graven upon the walls of the Catacombs. Can the symbol of God be an insult?

Through the broken window enter the damp, biting

wind and the wicked little song. But Madame hears nothing. She sobs like a fountain, and from her convulsed lips break isolated words: "Ungrateful—scoundrel—shopkeeper—little bookseller's son," ending in a fit of hysterics.

"Ah!" says Anatole France, recovering his calm. "A little rain stops much wind. Give me the eau de Cologne. It will be all right now. Reconciliations are always tender. Tell Josephine to fetch a cab, and pass me the water-jug and the mirror."

She recovers her senses. He shoves the glass in front of her nose.

"Just see what a state you have thrown yourself into, my dearest friend. Don't, don't be your own executioner!"

He swabs her with eau de Cologne, which she repels in disgust.

"You got that horrid-smelling stuff at some bazaar! It makes me feel quite sick. Very good then. Go to the other side of the world. But François shall go with you. He won't leave you by so much as a hair's breadth."

And as she reddens her lips and powders herself, she repeats: "A woman to make scandal! I, a woman to make scandal!"

\* \* \* \* \*

#### FAREWELL AT CHERBOURG

On the dock are ranged in hierarchical order the mummers and their fair ones who are going together with us to Buenos Ayres, the leading stars B—— and G—— in advance of the others, and their wives with them. Then at a respectful distance the stars of second magnitude, borrowed from the Odéon and other theatres of less fame. Though, to be sure, once across the waves,

these too will join the orbit of their greater fellows. Further off are the utilities.

G—— carries a wretched little dog tucked under his arm. The said dog yelps furiously. B—— brays Corneille. Our illustrious actresses, offering themselves to public admiration, play the part of Mary Stuart lamenting the fair land of France. Being still in Europe they take no notice of their comrades in the second line. It will take sea-sickness, and the feverish intimacy on board ship, and the passage of the line to break the ice. Finally in the distance stand the supers, a resigned group amid the luggage. Behind the theatrical exodus, like a backcloth, is a nasty, tumbled sea, as alluring as a tub of asphalt. Threats of a storm and the charms of spring chase one another across the sky.

France reviews the troops of Molière. He mumbles a sort of madrigal—Célimène, Champmeslé, Mademoiselle Mars, and B—— is Talma, and L—— is Roscius—and he is stopped just in time, for in his enthusiasm he was about to distribute mythology among the supers and to kiss their ladies' hands.

Now we are on the tug. Everyone stares. Everyone draws aside with feigned discretion. But everyone would be bitterly disappointed at losing a scrap of the great scene: that of the Farewell. A question is on everyone's lips, unspoken, and is eloquent in everyone's eyes: will they embrace?

The illustrious couple move out of the range of the cameras, Madame's maid in the background like the confidante of tragedy. Madame raises her veil for all eyes, however indiscreet, to see her face worn by years and care, in the vivid light, as she swallows her tears. He doffs his wide-brimmed, grey, worn hat, much embarrassed by a bunch of roses in his hand.

She takes a step or two, almost fainting. He comforts

her like a child, and as she comes back from far away, her eyes transfigured by a look of renewed youth as of forget-me-nots at morn, he seizes the occasion to thrust the bouquet upon her. He stifles her words with roses. Then Madame, looking with a wan smile at the rose leaves scattered on the ground, says :

“ You take me already for a tomb.”

She signals to her maid for her bag, and from it takes a notebook bound in brown cloth and fastened with a pencil.

“ Don’t waste your time. Note down your impressions day by day : you will come back with a book.”

He kisses her hand and skips on to the ship with lively little steps, turning two or three times to bow like an actor taking his call. His relief finds expression in his beloved comparisons and quotations :

“ Poor woman ! On the shore there, she made me think of Dido and the queen whose agitation Virgil compares to that of a top,” and he quotes the passage. “ Tibullus made use of the same image to depict the vivacity of his love. A top ! A top ! We should never dare nowadays to compare our mistress to such a toy. Ah ! How bold the Ancients were, and how young ! ”

He passes the notebook to me.

“ Keep this and put your expenses down in it. And if, on the way, some amorous verses come into your head, why then——”

\* \* \* \* \*

### *NEPTUNE AND THE MUSICAL GLASSES*

He deploras our omission to bring a dictionary of nautical terms along with us. For a whole month we shall be subjects of Neptune, and it would be good to speak the language of old seadogs, and talk, without



confusing them, of port and of starboard. He compares the ship to a Black Maria, in which we all, men, women, children and luggage, are being transported. Everything is stowed away anyhow, but with time we shall each find our balance and a friend or a dame to flirt with. Poor wretches, we are in a state of constant instability! "St. Augustine has a noble, poignant cry of the flesh that recalls Chateaubriand: 'Our heart is always disquiet till it finds repose in Thee!' *Thou*, for the son of Monica, is God. For the ordinary run of men, it is a goddess."

The luggage is hoisted on board from the tug, every man's eyes anxiously following his own in the air. Molière's boxes are decorated with elaborate labels that read: '*Comédie française. Chimène tour.*' We, who have nothing dramatic about us, feel slightly humiliated. The actors march up the gangway with tragic solemnity. Men feverishly shake the captain's hand. Women make him little curtsies, as to the Well Beloved. He, immovable, looks at them with little minnow eyes that shine ironically from an apoplexy of a face and, for the ladies, lets loose an appreciative puff from his short, stinking pipe.

Below decks we are moved to mirth. Anatole France's publisher has made the Master a present of a toy dinner basket in which a whole service of minute plates, Lilliputian napkins and mugs, fitted one into another Chinese fashion, are fixed to the basket-work. François runs up in alarm. While he was watching over the transfer of the luggage, the precious basket disappeared. His desperation is such that he is ready to throw himself into the sea. He vehemently suspects a lady of the crime.

"What basket?" exclaims France, who is reciting from *Athalie* to B——.

"Alas! C——L——'s basket."

"Someone has taken it," says France. "So much the better!"

\* \* \* \* \*

*"LOOK HERE UPON THIS PICTURE, THEN ON  
THIS"*

He takes possession of his cabin, frisking about like a pea in the saucepan, jumping, humming, rubbing his hands:

"Now we're off for six months at least."

You would think he was a recruit on the spree or a schoolboy leaving for the holidays. François brings in the cabin trunk and the suitcase, and the Master arranges his things with the air of one making friends with his floating home. He transforms the washstand into a work-table. On the flap of the basin he places a blotting-pad, a little antique writing-desk, and his quill pens. He has found his slippers and his crimson skull-cap: he feels thoroughly at ease. He tears Madame's photograph to pieces, and François gleans them from the carpet to throw them into the toilet pail. M. Bergeret sticks another photograph into the corner of the mirror, that of the late lamented dog who was his model for *Putois*.

"He is such an excellent companion, and always of one's own opinion. There was a king of Spain once who said that he loved neither dogs nor women because they licked too much. A mean-spirited fellow."

When François is out of the cabin, he confides to me:

"We must make peace with that varlet. How can we corrupt him? He will write piles of nonsense to Madame. Serve her right! Why must she set this Argus of the pantry at our coat-tails? In any case, should he grow zealous beyond the bounds of his service, we can lose him at some port of call. Pearl among

domestics though he be, he must have some foible. Study his psychology ; learn his tendencies. Has he leanings towards vice ? What about the women ? Surely he must love money. To sacrifice on the altars of Venus and Bacchus, money is a necessity.

“ When we know the weak spot in our duster-bearer’s cuirass, we will lay a trap for him—forget him in some dance hall or brothel at Vigo, Madeira or Rio. He will follow us by the next boat, but we shall be in advance of him with the news and it’s we who will complain of him to Madame. Can’t you see the letter ? ‘ In whom can one have confidence, dear friend ? Your guardian angel has deserted us, on the threshold of the New World.’

“ Astonishing how Madame is prejudiced against you ! What have you done to her, little wretch ? O hypocrite ! to pretend that you don’t know ! First of all, you wouldn’t lunch with her on Wednesdays any longer. Insult for the canteen and for the canteen-woman. Another offence : she doesn’t like the shape of your nose. Obviously, you couldn’t change it. At least, it would be difficult. Perhaps a surgical operation. Then she says that, prior to Monsieur’s desertion, you were always trying to make Monsieur look ridiculous, and when once she said something to you, quite amiably, on the subject, you replied tartly : ‘ Pardon me, Madame, but when I made Monsieur’s acquaintance the greater part of the work was already done.’

“ Finally, she is persuaded that you are a fearful libertine, the greatest Lothario of the left bank, and the lover of eleven thousand virgins. You know that they show you at Cologne the bones of these eleven thousand maidens : to find as many in Paris you would wear out a lot of spectacles.

“ Now do you know what began this bee in Madame’s

bonnet? I can tell you now that we are setting sail for another hemisphere. Whenever I wanted to get free and be off for a lark, I would despatch to myself a telegram or a pneumatic, signed by your name, about Joan of Arc. You gave me rendez-vous in far-off bookshops and mythical libraries. You had some document of the highest importance about the Virgin of Domrémy to show me. It almost always worked! And I would jump into a cab and betake myself to see other maids, not of Orleans. You can't imagine the hatred that Madame cherishes in her heart for the Maid and you. You did well not to come on Wednesdays, for she was quite capable of putting rats'-bane in your coffee. What do you say to my dodge? Come, come, don't look so downcast. It was only a joke!"

\* \* \* \* \*

#### AT TABLE

The dining-saloon of the ship is a refectory of artistic pretensions. The walls are decorated with a patchwork of neuralgic design, in specimens of all the woods from all the Isles. Amid these tender meanderings the sea laughs at you through the oval of a port, as with a lovely impudent eye.

Germans, English, Spaniards, Portuguese—each nation has its own place.

We French occupy the first table near the door. We are late. The actors are already at table, pillaging the *hors-d'œuvre*. Olive in mouth, napkin in hand, they feign to rise and interrupt the service, so as to accord to the writer the place due to him. They play a scene of an ovation, but unconvincedly; then the men fall again upon their plates. As for the women, their homage is manifested by little quiverings. It is plain that our

stars of the footlights consider themselves of the same rank as M. Bergeret. The writer is celebrated in Europe. They are celebrated all over the world. Anatole France takes a seat at the end of the table. His neighbour is the Duenna. She must be the least applauded of the company, and the least paid, for they are ranged progressively to the other end of the table where sit the illustrious ones with their dames, and at the top of it B—— and G—— glaring at one another like two china bulldogs. Jaws work. Talk flags. The actors seem to have less imagination than appetite.

One name recurs ceaselessly in the conversation: "Chimène." France, thinking of the Cid, asks his neighbour. Chimène is not a woman but the manager of the company, that little man of Hebrew countenance who is eating, segregated from the others, at the next table. Poor Chimène, who has got all these folk together! No one has a good word for him. "He doesn't know a thing about his job. A mean skunk. A cunning rascal. A Tartufe. Does he know how to read? He knows how to count, anyway. Why have they all come with him? Not for money, but for glory!"

What age is the Duenna? Let us be chivalrous: half a century. She has a high, gracious look like a dethroned queen and bears the memory of her triumphs in an imperious carriage of the head. She wields her fork like a sceptre. Dissecting a leg of chicken, she makes you think of Athalie, burning to destroy the children of Ochosias. Her eye is languorous and has a slight squint. To protect her wig, blonde like a child's, from the oxide of the sea air, she is turbaned with a scarf of brilliant colours. A good deal made up, and two or three patches look like flies drowned in a strawberry ice-cream. A bead necklace. Innumerable rings. A suggestion of the lady box-office keeper at a circus.



The Duenna is highly corsetted, but a shade round-shouldered, one sees. For the rest, an excellent soul. When you ask the others about her talent, the opinion is unanimous. "She is such a good woman." Charming people that we are ! Out of the word "good" we have made an insult.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### A CRITICISM

Someone asks him after the performance what he thinks of B—— :

"He has good lungs ; he would do wonders in a glass-blowing factory. What a shouter ! My ears still tingle from him. Actors who feel nothing always shout louder than the others."

\* \* \* \* \*

#### TIPS

"In the heroic age, the privilege of spoiling travellers belonged to the demigods. From them it passed to the knights of feudal times. In our miserable era of democracy it has greatly degenerated, for now there is no good mother's son but concerns himself with it. What formerly was called ransom or tribute or toll, and was levied mace or carbine in hand, is now collected with a smile under the name of *pourboire*. To drink ! True, if the valets, pages, chambermaids, waiters and what not absorbed this forced charity at the wine shop, they would never cease being drunk. 'But,' explain these excellent persons, 'the *pourboire* is that we may have enough to eat.' Doubtless, my child, you have brought with you a small store of coin. This English ship is a miracle of comfort, of magnificence, of cleanliness. To be sure there lacks

a little that welcoming sense of cheer that with us sometimes makes up for negligence. Consideration is here meted out at a fixed price : we have to do with businesslike folk.

“ I have not a mathematical head. Then what makes the problem harder is the difference in currency. We have left home provided with French money to gain, on an English ship, the shore of the Argentine where we shall reap a harvest of innumerable pesos. Pesos, pounds, francs—what a hurly-burly ! I am too old to study these conjuring tricks ; but you, my friend, are at the age when everything comes easy. How much have you brought ? Two thousand three hundred francs ? Ho, ho ! A fine sum. At your age I had not so much. Economy will get you everywhere. My lamented father, who was no genius, constantly repeated that adage. Thrift or waste, it gets us all to the grave ! My dear child, I put the matter of tips into your hands. Be, on the crossing, my minister of finance. Note the expenditure day by day ; but be tender with our little purse ! We'll start with a clean slate on landing.

“ The difficult thing about tips, my friend, is to stick to the golden mean. Even so do politicians, like tight-rope dancers, seek all the time the golden mean between aristocracy and demagogy. Love too has its golden mean. But there, when you've found that more or less golden mean, you find too you've sucked the orange and dream of pastures new. The thing is to conform to custom. If you go beyond the usual tip, we shall be taken for new rich. The varlets will despise us, and say : ‘ If they chuck their money about right and left—here, that is, to port and starboard—they can't be people of position ; mere new rich, of no family whatever.’ And they will be right. How do our Frontins, our Mas-carilles, and our Scapins recognize well-born folks ? By

their generosity? Indeed not. Generosity is the most plebeian and the easiest of virtues. Your true aristocrat is always a shade stingy in the ordinary affairs of life. But when he sets out to be munificent, ah, then—! That is what Madame is for ever saying to me in France. Do we take a cab, we squabble over what to pay our Automedon. ‘Five sous,’ she cries, ‘is ample for the tip!’ I obey. The cab-driver makes a circuit of sea, stable, farmyard, and pigsty to find words discourteous enough for me. But I don’t budge: his abuse is evidence of my aristocratic mien, and of class war. In this thorny question of tips, escape abuse as far as you can; though, to be sure, the abuse will be in English, and since you are innocent of the tongue of Shakespeare, why then——”

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*CORNEILLE v. RACINE*

Of a morning, after breakfast, the Duenna takes a walk, so as not to get fat. B——, the tragedian, and Anatole France have a tilting match the while. Armed both with pitiless memories, they flood the deck with quotations, each hurling tirades from his favourite poet at the other’s head. Both are blessed with stout lungs. When one stops for a breather, the other grabs the trumpet. France declaims Racine through his nose, B—— bellows Corneille. The high priest Joad denounces to Mithridates Athalie’s crimes. So deep are they in their hobby that they don’t notice young England as deep in games. They upset the dalliance and the matches, entangle their tragic caracoling in Mme. T——’s skein of wool, overset skittles and deck croquet and quoits. In vain the youngsters strike their angry balls through hoops made by illustrious legs: the King of Pontium and the high priest pursue their lamentations.

" Ah, Corneille ! "

" Only Racine is worth notice ! "

Breathless, the spouters exchange murderous glances of fiery disdain. They shrug their shoulders, as who should say :

" Waste of time ! I might as well recite Virgil to a jackass."

They separate frowning, only to make it up again in the afternoon. Listen to the cooing sound of——

" True, there are in Corneille certain passages worthy of Racine," and so forth and so on.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### ESTHER AND ATHALIE

He is of the same opinion as Voltaire and d'Alembert : that *Cinna* is a cold, uninteresting play, a middle-class dialogue in five acts. It is a rain of cinders, in which Augustus' clemency gives a spark or two.

" And *The Cid*, Master ? "

" It's a tragi-comedy. When he tries to be affecting, Corneille only makes you laugh. Some of the scenes are tolerable. But the part of Don Sancho ! His best things are the fifth act of *Rodogune* and the fourth of *Héracléus*. And the style—Norman, specious, involved. He pleads, argues, balances alternatives, now on one foot, now on the other. Corneille is the real father of melo-drama. The great tragic dramatist is Racine, the Racine of *Phèdre*, of *Britannicus*, and of *Bérénice*. After his conversion he is not worth tuppence. Champmeslé was necessary to him. Becoming a good father and husband, he became a bad poet. I can understand that."

" What about *Esther* ? And *Athalie* ? "

" Plays for church committees. I have a great fondness for *Esther*.

'O banks of Jordan, fields beloved of heaven,  
O sacred mounts and fertile valleys  
Sanctified by a hundred miracles !  
Shall we for ever be exiled  
From the fair land of our forefathers ?

Reed-pipe verses, canticle verses ! It's often the same. But put them into the charming mouths of the young ladies at St. Cyr ! The royal lady-boarders were twelve, thirteen, or fourteen years old. The awkward age ! The charming age ! Half boys, half girls, who laugh and cry at one and the same moment. Will they be duchesses or dairy maids ? Duchesses. They are convinced of it.

" They have been collected into Mme. de Maintenon's aviary from all the provinces of the kingdom, your Languedoc included. They are well-born, descended maybe from Charlemagne or the Virgin Mary, and the rats nibble and nest in the parchments of their family archives. But they are younger daughters and have nothing but their eyes to weep with. Yet what fair eyes ! Poor doves snatched from rustic cotes that play, on their hills, at being fortresses. The steward has written to Court and they have been put weeping into the coach or perhaps the family carriage, with their little trunk, the hat box, the old-fashioned dresses, the flask of Hungary water, and the trousseau spun and sewn of an evening with the hemp and wool of the country. They are the victims of state policy. Here they are at St. Cyr. They are given a ribbon, rules, a confessor, and a dancing master. In the end they see the king, of whom they have heard with terror and love.

" He is an old man. He is nothing but a wig. To save him from boredom a play is acted, one by M. Racine, a libertine poet to whom grace has come. And with all their heart the young ladies sing the stanzas in *Esther* to the music of Jean Baptiste Moreau. By what emotion are they not transfigured ! The Jordan, the



beloved fields and skies are the skies, fields, and streams of the Cévennes. The fields of rye and barley are those where they played with their cousins in the spring all fresh with young grass. The cedars of Lebanon are their own chestnut trees. The sweet children are quite homesick—but perhaps I am going rather far: they are forestalling Chateaubriand!

“I don’t care much for *Athalie*. Genius is in every scrap of it, undoubtedly. When Joad speaks it is like Cedron, a perfect torrent of psalms. But where are the action and the interest? Racine wrote it as a penance; that’s plain—in fact, much too plain. *Athalie* herself is the wickedest creature, who has a fit of tenderness. Ah, she’s well rewarded for it! At the sight of Joas the murderess of Ochosias’ children suddenly grows motherly. The rock is softened. She would carry off the little choir-boy and intoxicate him with pleasures. I’m not exaggerating:

“‘Close to me, a multitude of pleasures will seek you out.’ What pleasures? We don’t know. She is an idolatress! Very disturbing: it suggests incest. Maybe after all she only means wooden horses and drums. But will such poor toys tempt the choir-boy to leave his sacred duties? No! See how he snubs his grandmother:

‘The pleasures of the wicked flow out like a torrent . . .’

“He ought to be given a good smacking to teach him respect towards elderly persons. The little wretch will plainly come to a bad end. Joad is a Tartufe. And Abner an old drum-major.

“But what poetry, my friend!

“It is prophecy in declamation.”

\* \* \* \* \*

*THE INGÉNUÉ*

The Ingénue is the miracle of the company. She really is an ingénue. How old is she? Sixteen? Seventeen? Eighteen? She has the rich curves and the brilliance of the down in a fine fruit, and the complete awkwardness of a school-miss in the parlour. The eyes are shiny and modest. Magnificent hair tumbles in a well-ordered cascade. Among the carefully-got-up ladies of our theatrical army, with their many long-service stripes, Mlle. T—— blooms like a periwinkle of the fields in the midst of artificial roses. Where have they discovered her? Under the arches of some provincial convent? No. Our perfect ingénue was born on the boards, being a natural child of T——, who left a fair renown as an actor behind him. She bears his sounding name with blushing modesty, seeming almost to apologize for the presumption. As who should say by her discreet behaviour: "Don't be cross with me for being printed so prominently on the bills. In spite of my birth I am truly middle-class and very prudish. I have really nothing to do with all these plaudits and wreaths. Why can't I, now, instead of these unreal cooings and endless tirades that I spout like a child reciting before company—why can't I just be learning good household recipes and devote myself to jams and sweets? What value have the footlights and greenroom intrigues and all these storms beside the peace of a home? Oh for a quiet little nest, an unruffled life of security, a limited horizon, a destiny no greater than my tastes! Alas, I am prisoner to my name. Mamma wants me to act like poor dear papa. And I mustn't annoy mamma: she is so good!"

It's true; Mamma T—— is very good. Round, plump, shortsighted, for ever astonished, she has come on the tour as her daughter's dresser. For the leading ladies

have the right each to bring a maid who travels second-class, with the supers. At mealtimes the excellent mother cheerfully changes her class ; then at dessert we see her reappear, her everlasting work-bag hanging on her arm like the officiating priest's maniple. It is a noble bag of black velvet that confers a sort of dignity on her. There is, in this good soul of fifty overripe years, something of the priest's servant, a touch of the schoolmistress, a shade of the pew-opener. Who would think that she was a product of the wings of the theatre ? Now she sits down by her daughter.

"Have you dined well, Madame T—— ? Do they give you enough to eat ? "

"Oh, yes. Quite enough. Excellent. Indeed, too much."

But she is contemplating her daughter. It is a perpetual ecstasy. To see her darling successful is dinner enough for her : a mere crust would suffice. We pass her a contraband cup of coffee, which she sips with emotion, and a drop of liqueur, that unlocks her lips. Words come and many sighs as she recalls the great lamented actor. Ah, if only poor T—— were there ! And she wipes her sugary lips with a fat little hand.

\* \* \* \* \*

### *THE TAPESTRY*

On deck, from dawn to dusk, Mme. T—— plies her needles on a Homeric tapestry. "It is to cover a set of drawing-room furniture, cross-stitch on Java canvas." On a background of roses and lilies a dragon darts his fiery tongue and writhes an infinitely twisting tail. When she has made a certain number of stitches, she infallibly reflexes her steel spectacles on that snub nose ; then she begins again. It never occurs to her to look at the sea.

Calm or rough, it's all the same to her. She embroiders on board ship just as she sat embroidering between the piano and the window in the little red sitting-room near the Odéon. The tour, the voyage and the rivalry between the two tragedians make as much impression on her as water on a duck's back. There is her daughter, and there is her tapestry: that is all. On both subjects she is inexhaustible.

She undertook the great tapestry more than twenty years ago for T——. But see how things fall out in this tricky world. A thousand obstacles have fouled the wool and frayed the silk, and T—— died without ever seeing the priceless work that was destined for him. Well, it shall be for his daughter. She has already achieved the four chairs and the two arm-chairs. Now remains the principal piece, the sofa. You can't imagine how many lilies and roses and dragons it takes to cover a sofa.

To tease her someone tells the good dame that sofas have gone out of fashion. You should see her emotion. She says over and over again: "A drawing-room without a sofa! A drawing-room without a sofa!" The cornerstone of middle-class respectability disappear! Never! There was a sofa in her mother's drawing-room. There shall be a sofa in that of her daughter, though she lose her eyes over it. "The trouble is that the wools and the silks lose their colour while you are embroidering; and then it's so difficult to match them."

\* \* \* \* \*

"MY UNCLE"

He has the figure, the quickness, and the importunity of a child of eight. He is a sculptor, but this is not, in his own eyes, his chief title to fame. Before all and above

all, he is his uncle's nephew. "My uncle" figures at least ten times in a conversation of as many phrases. It's "my uncle" here, and "my uncle" there. "My uncle said to me." And "I said to my uncle."

It is the uncle who counselled the nephew to go on the voyage to the new world. "Profit by Anatole France's tour! Join the actors on the ship. The Argentine is bulging with wheat and barley and frozen meat. There's more money there than anyone knows what to do with. When you say: 'I am the nephew of my uncle' they will order busts and statues and tombs and fountains by the dozen. Take the photograph of your Faun to dazzle them." At this point in the story the sculptor nephew produces from an inside pocket a case resembling a notary's portfolio, whence he takes a set of worn and sweaty photographs.

"This is the bust of the Marquise de ——. Here is the Cardinal. You recognize this: the ambassadress of ——" Ultimately we come to the Faun, lost in this society Blue Book.

"What do you think of it? Wouldn't you take it for an antique? Isn't it graceful? Isn't it naughty? Look at the dimple on his belly!" Thus he does the honours of his Faun. "It's too bad that such a masterpiece should have been given such a wretched site in France! In spite of everything my uncle could do, it was shoved"—only the sculptor nephew uses a more virile term—"into a thicket in the Forest of Meudon. The only people to admire my Faun are poachers.

"How did I have the idea for the statue? So antique and yet so modern, isn't it? It was very simple. My uncle always used to tell me: 'Do something decorative. Something to hit the public in the eye. Something like Rodin. Put your back into it, and I'll get your statue put up in the finest site in Paris—the Tuileries or the



Place de la Concorde.' I tried allegories—Humanities, and Progresses, and Revenges—but it was no good: I only wasted my time and my clay. They had no life. Then one morning a little Italian of about fifteen with a head of Virgil came to offer himself as a model. I made him strip and pose. But it would not do. It was too sugary, too pretty-pretty.

"I was quite discouraged. I had no longer any heart in the work, but how could I tell my uncle? One evening as we were having dinner together—it was a Gascon dish. I am from Gascony, you know: perhaps you noticed it from my accent? Oh, I don't attempt to conceal my conceit! It's a part of my talent, you see. Well, I was carving, and it was a kid's leg. There was still a scrap of the hair round the hoof. It was that hair that engendered the Faun! A tasty morsel with a touch of garlic was just melting in my mouth when, all of a sudden, I said to myself: 'Take the torso of the little Italian who looks like Virgil, stick on the hairy hind part of a goat, and there's your mythological subject!' People may laugh at mythology, but what should we artists do without it? Next morning I went to my butcher and said: 'Give me a leg of kid, but with the hair, tail, and all the perquisites.' The boor would have none of it. His soul was shut to art and mythology was unknown to him. He repeated: 'A leg o' kid with its hair and all the rest? You're joking. Never seen such a thing.'—'But that's exactly why I want it!' In the end, by paying a handsome price, I got my kid's leg all complete—you understand. After taking a cast, we ate it, roast with potatoes. And didn't we just lick our fingers! So, thanks to the kid, I made a masterpiece of the little Italian. Just look!"

Then he starts the anecdote all over again, showing the photograph to the whole boat, and lamenting: "A

masterpiece like that, stuck into the middle of a wood ! Though my uncle worked like a Trojan for it ! And you know the influence that my uncle has ! ”

Ultimately someone makes bold to ask : “ Excuse me, but who is your illustrious uncle ? ”

The nephew sculptor looks as if he would have an apoplectic fit.

“ What, you don't know ? I thought everyone knew that ! My uncle is G——, the only manager of the Opéra who made art and business go in harness together. The idiots sent him away, and since then the Opéra's been a booth at a fair. The managers only manage the expenditure and the whistle manufacturers are making their fortune. But they'll have to recall my uncle. If not, the Opéra and the Republic will both be in the soup.”

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#### THE AGE OF MASKS

“ Why do I go in for politics ? Why does Sarah Bernhardt in her old age play breeches parts ? Because one must do something new. For half a century and more Sarah has bleated every tense of the verb to love. People have had enough of it ! She said to me one day, ‘ You ought to write me a play.’ According to Madame, I have no sense of the theatre. But I'm fond of it : I like being in the wings and seeing the life of rehearsals—something betwixt fiction and fact. So I set about finding a subject. I searched my memory and my library. A historical drama, of course, it should be. Drama is the moral of history. And I found it : *Alfarez the Nun*. She was a sort of Spanish Joan of Arc, minus the maidenhood. She was a novice, I forget where ; jumped over the wall, fought a duel, adopted breeches, then off to America,

where she had a thousand and one adventures, and finally came back to kiss the Pope's slipper and get absolution from him. Why did I choose Alfarez the Nun for Sarah? On account of the costume. This time Sarah would play a young man. She would change her sex, refurbish her wardrobe and her success. It would be a new career opening before her. She could aspire to Hamlet and the Cid! Men who really love the sex are grateful to an actress for playing breeches parts at sixty. There are also those who love the other sex; but they are not in the majority.

"In literature it's the same thing. For half a century, I purred. I gave the public ingenious bouquets, culled here and there, from *La Légende Dorée* and from Voltaire: I played at indifference. It's high time to change all that. People must take me seriously. After scepticism, the political poster. Instead of the tower of ivory, public meetings. It's not I who invented the recipe. It is the same as Hugo's and Renan's. What did not old Victor do, to get into the Senate and the Panthéon? He got himself exiled. Note that at the time of the *coup d'état* no one took him seriously. When the Empire fell, besides his poetic glory, he was crowned with the cap of a national guard."

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#### GREENROOM GOSSIP

The Duenna has been to Buenos Ayres on several previous occasions. For the matter of that she has appeared on the stage of all the great theatres in Europe, and has played every kind of part on tour. Formerly it was lovesick heroines; now it is heavy parts. She is full of philosophy and useful hints, having had much experience on board ship.

"As far as Lisbon we have to pay separately for our

wine at table. Tips are given in pounds. How is Anatole France to be paid for his lectures—in pounds, francs or pesetas? This is important on account of the exchange. Our cabins are not really cabins-de-luxe, but the next thing. There has been some queer dealing over the tickets. Besides, the best cabins are forward, whereas we are near the engines. Useless to make a fuss. The English are such surly creatures. If you speak to them in French, they simply don't answer. Does Anatole France know English? What a pity! It's so useful for the service. He might learn the most ordinary words at all events: that would help. She has a very good cabin, amidships—the steadiest point in the boat. She never suffers from sea-sickness. Nor does France? She can eat in the middle of a storm."

"You are a seagull," says Anatole France.

The Duenna has all the motherly and housekeeping sciences and knows by heart the redoubtable list of English sauces. She is learned in bills-of-fare. But she hardly ever talks of plays, and her triumphs in them, of countries or their capitals.

"Yes, St. Petersburg is a very fine town. And the Russians are perfect gentlemen. It's there you find the best French cooking. But furs—who'd believe it?—are impossibly expensive. Better buy them in Paris. She has played before the Tsar. Oh, he was a man like everybody else. He seemed bored. What was the play? Something classic—she has forgotten. You know, people don't applaud there: it makes such a chill in the house. Actors, you know, hardly see the towns they pass through. They go to bed when others are getting up. Then there are rehearsals and one's toilette and flirtations—oh no, you mustn't forget them—so there's hardly time to rush about to sights and museums. One can always read Baedeker and buy picture postcards."

Some of the comedians bring their parts to table with them and mouth speeches together with bread and meat. Deaf to conversation like brats, and buzzing like bees, they go through the plays of the tour, helping themselves as with despair from the steward who barely can rouse them from their dreams of tragedy. Then they pile on their plates innumerable cuts of roast beef, and mountains of potatoes. It is not gluttony, but conviction. They are not on board ship but on the boards. Their fork is a Moorish sword, or Bajazet's scimitar. When they seize the decanter, it is to encarnadine the table cloth, and the neighbours push away in terror. Generally the tragedy ends with the most commonplace of oaths, the actor sticks a greasy knife between the pages to mark his place, loudly invokes his Creator, and wishes Chimène and the author of the play to the devil. After all there is the prompter to fall back on. He travels second class, with the supers.

A question raised at the very first meal agitates our table daily, noon and night. The alternatives are canvassed over and over again with the same passion. It is like a clock, stopped, and suddenly set going by a flip to its pendulum. Is the company now on its way to play the classics in South America (*Le Cid*, *Horace*, *Cinna*, *La Tour de Nesles*, *Le Père Lebonnard*, *Pour la Couronne*), under Chimène's management, to be called B——'s company, or G——'s company? Which of the two tragedians shall take precedence on board ship, at the hotel, and on the bills? Sketches of bills are drawn on the back of menus, and there are as many variants as actors. The most unexpected arguments are sometimes flung into the controversy. For instance:

"Young man, while you were still sucking your thumb, I was getting six curtain calls at a time at the *Comédie*!"

"Don't shout so loud! There's no *claque* here."



Then both clans turn to the table where Chimène sits alone, working his jaws. Let him speak out ! This state of doubt must cease. It has lasted too long already.

“ When you invited me to accompany you, sir, on this tour, you said to me : ‘ I must have a famous name. Without you the tour will be a frost.’ And I accepted for the honour of the *Comédie* and for the honour of France ! ”

“ Precisely what you said to me ! ” howls G——. But the manager gets out of it. He listens good-humouredly to the speeches, then applauds as if he were in the theatre, and bows.

“ Bravo, gentlemen ! Fine ! But don’t use up all your fire on the boat. Keep some sparks of it for Buenos Ayres.”

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#### AN IDYLL

The Brazilian student is courting the Ingénue, and the languorous ups and downs of their idyll attracts the attention of the whole ship. We mark the tricks, criticize the play. The ladies descry much coquetry and a good deal that is naughty in the Ingénue’s ingenuousness. The men put themselves in Celadon’s shoes. “ Ah, if but that little bit of a thing were worth the trouble ! But she’s too gentle a quarry. Hardly out of her swaddling clothes. Give us more spicy game ! ”

Turn about, we go on fatigue duty of entertaining mother T—— on deck. We feign a vivid interest in the tapestry dragons. Will she finish the interminable tail, twisted like a mattress spring, before Buenos Ayres ?

What an idea ! Of course she will, God willing and weather permitting. The calm of the sea depends on God’s goodness, doesn’t it ? For the vigilant mother

cannot embroider in her small cabin. You can't see a thing there. The other day she tried during the storm and had to do the work all over again, having made a mistake in her card of wool: she had given the scaly colours of the dragon to the spotless lily.

Suddenly the worker of embroidery lays down her needle and exclaims: "Where is my daughter?"

We recite the consecrated answer: "She is rehearsing up there—or down there—with her comrades. What talent she has! True native genius!"

In truth the scene has a pretty charm belonging to another time. He and she hang, arm in arm, on the rigging. They say nothing. They contemplate the sea. They fill their stupid, splendid, flowerlike eyes with its salt motion. Then they look at one another with sweet confidence and exchange a drunken, chaste, ridiculous kiss. Such honest, provincial love upon our Noah's Ark of cosmopolitan comedy is like a novel of Octave Feuillet flowering upon the ocean, as it were a cup of asses' milk after a stinging cocktail.

Anatole France writes the student down an ass.

"He is simply romancing! Why doesn't he come to facts? He should work up to his climax. But the tom-fool is still at little kisses on the lips, and soft nothings—mere beginnings. Love is a jealous God. Cupid won't be fed on sighs and soothing drinks. He who heats the furnace and delays to put in his earthenware risks finding another's pot there. Unless he steps lively, our student will be cuckold in bud before he can be so in blossom. For the matter of that he will be in excellent company."

Follows a disquisition on the most illustrious cuckolds in literature and politics.

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*RABELAIS AND THE PRINTING PRESS*

“Rabelais, who did not believe in much, yet believed that the printing press was invented by divine inspiration. Allowance must be made for drunkenness. Our humanists fed on theology and other lenten fare of the scolastics found one day, thanks to Gutenberg, the cellar of Horace and Virgil. They came out staggering and shouting insults at the God who was born in a stable. Nevertheless, the ancients, whom they considered their masters in everything, were ignorant of the noble, magic art that by means of characters impressed.

*“Gives body to sounds and to thoughts a soul.”*

“If the ancients did not know the printing press, it was because they did not want to. What is needed for printing? A press and characters. They were not ignorant of the press. They need it in the preparation of certain stuffs, for wine making, and for other purposes. And what is a character for printing? A tiny medal. In numismatics we are children compared to the ancients. The older is a coin, the younger it becomes, because the cleaner stamped. Do you mean to tell me they never had the idea of casting twenty-five medals in relief and putting them together? That is the whole art of printing. What they doubtless feared was the multiplication of books. With them, science had a sacerdotal character. In their gayest authors you find traces of initiation and divination and symbolism. Virgil wrote for Augustus, Maecenas, and the Master’s court. His verses, copied with care on papyrus, were preserved in caskets of sweet-smelling wood. It was exquisite food, but for mouths of the refined. The totally modern idea of measuring the genius of a writer by the number of his readers would have appeared grotesque to Horace or Catullus.”

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## BENEDICTIO PUTEI

“ In certain parts of the country the custom still exists of purifying women after confinement. It is called *les relevailles*, and is a survival of the Mosaic law which forbade women brought to bed of a boy to leave house before forty days. For a girl, it was eighty days. Girls therefore are twice as impure as boys. Baptism, as you know, was followed by exorcism, and there too you plainly see the Church's distrust of the sex, for in certain mediæval liturgies of the time of Joan of Arc the exorcism was twice as long for girls as for their brothers. The square bonnets explained that double ration of liturgy and of spittle—for spittle was used in exorcism—by the topographical map of the battlefield. Plainly the devils had the resource of entrenching themselves with far greater ease in woman's cavernous landscape, and their cunning received double force in certain crevices.

“ Where this custom still persists, she who has given birth, desirous of being ‘uplifted,’ presents herself, candle in hand, at the door of a church or, sometimes, at the altar of the Holy Virgin or at the sacristy, with her infant in her arms. The priest reads over her St. Luke's account of the purification of Mary, and then intones the canticle of Simeon. In some dioceses he blesses a loaf of bread, half of which is for himself and half for her. In parts of the South the custom is still kept up. There was a town in Gascony where a woman presented herself to be ‘uplifted.’ But the priest was from north of the Loire and did not know the usage. The infant waited and the woman waited, watching ironically while the priest hunted for the proper benediction. He found benedictions for boats, for bells, for beds, for flags: ‘Well,’ her look seemed to say, ‘what an ignorant vicar they have sent us, to be sure!’ He was put in such a rage that he

grabbed at any page of his book, and spouted it over her ! It was the *Benedictio Putei*—the benediction of a well. It fitted the occasion perfectly."

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#### MY PAINTER IN ORDINARY

There is also Z——, who styles himself "painter in ordinary to Anatole France." He is taking with him to America several tons of canvas representing the Villa Said on all its sides, and in and out of all its corners. He will exhibit his pictures at Buenos Ayres during the lectures: the success will surpass everything. Z—— is the son of one of the Master's most intimate friends, a friend from childhood. France looks askance at him.

"He has not an atom of talent but, alas ! prodigious application. In one hour he is capable of spoiling a kilometre of canvas and Heaven knows how many tons of oil and paint—in any case a perfect record. The man has tried every style—illustration, portraits, landscape—and in each he has shown the same mediocrity. Mediocrity ? The word is not strong enough. He has not a single fault and is completely insignificant. He has a wife and child to feed. Poor red-haired wretch, he's full of ambition—dreams of glory and Pactolus, whereas he should be selling ties at the *Bon Marché*. How he cadges for orders from the State, for official frescoes in the Panthéon ! And, as his father was a man of letters, he throws in a bit of literature as makeweight.

"It is a case of frenzy united to impotence. He took root in my house as firmly as ivy on the bark of an oak. 'I die where I attach myself.' Otherwise said : 'I live on your substance and I will suck you dry.' Z—— came one morning in such pale and lamentable case, that I had not the strength to turn him away, but yielded to



pity. Grave error! You should take great care not to let yourself be netted. What you lose in firmness, your solicitor gains in rapacity. He takes out a mortgage on you. The first kindness inevitably leads to a second. If you break the chain, it's you who are in the wrong. It's the man you've obliged makes the fine showing. 'What!' says he. 'You refuse me after all you've done for me? What ingratitude!'

"As I was leaving the Villa Said one morning to lunch at Madame's, I stumbled over Z—— obstructing the alley with his paraphernalia.

"'Are you painting that wall? But it's Second Empire, it has no value whatever. It's not worth the paint.'

"'Yes, but I have an order for an illustrated article on Monsieur Bergeret's house in an expensive magazine. Five hundred lines, well paid too. They are taking the text for the sake of the illustration.'

"'Then illustrate, my friend,' I replied thoughtlessly. 'Illustrate me, illustrate us, let us illustrate.'

"Next day at the same time I found him with his easel in the hall, having, I know not how, gained the precious key of the gate to Josephine's heart. The day after he was on the first landing, fabricating a kind of ill-tempered Meissonier-like picture of the staircase in all its aspects: 'Right-hand side of Anatole France's staircase'—'Left-hand side of Anatole France's staircase'—and so forth. The appetite had grown by what it fed on.

"In the spring I made my annual voyage in Italy with Madame. I left in Easter week and came back about Midsummer Day. On entering my room, I found Z—— occupied on a portrait of my bed and my night table. He said to me with admirable grace, 'You don't disturb me at all, my dear Master.' Thenceforward he has formed a part of my household. He has clamped

himself on to the furniture and grown incorporate with the walls. He has become my official painter. He even prints the title on his visiting cards! He has painted all the rooms—those intended for the most intimate usage as well as the reception rooms: alone, the w.c. has escaped his stercoraceous brush. Then one fine day my painter-in-ordinary dished up all these horrors in an exhibition. The odd thing is that he sold some of the daubs.

“ His ambition is to sell the whole gallery, at one fell swoop, to some Maecenas. So, as only the New World could be rich enough to give the proper price for these marvels, friends and relatives were touched, the sugar tongs and the six silver knives and forks and Mme. Z——’s ring were pawned, the canvases were packed and he took ship with them for America. Our ship! You wouldn’t have my official painter leave without his model. I belong to him. Now that he has fixed upon his canvas down to the dimples of my house, have I even the right to alter the furniture? No! Mediocre though it may be, Z——’s brush is painting history.”

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### *J. J. B. HIMSELF*

I must lack gravity. Just now the little English boys came to ask me to join in their game. They thought I was of their own age. What irony! At school I was known for my awkwardness. I couldn’t throw a ball or even a marble, or spread a hand of cards properly. Recreation seemed more tiring to me than school. I hated motion and noise, and loved silent solitude. As for my performances in the gymnasium, they were a scandal.

I did not dare tell the boys my age, but said that

I was ill. They are turning round about me, with proud and pitying looks.

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*LISBON*

At dawn the wind drops, and we pass from the stormy sea into the Tagus. Through the portholes the banks stretch out, soft and luminous, like those of a Norman stream. Windmills are stuck like toys on the top of hills green with young grass ; below it is longer, and among it gambol little horses, and black bulls low, their horns turned up-wind. On the pewter-grey of the sky stands out a romantic-looking pile, as it might be a drawing by Victor Hugo : it is Fort Belen. Everyone is on deck, drinking in Lisbon, which we shall reach in an hour. Anatole France, however, drinks and eats his breakfast for all the world as if he were at the Villa Said, or at Madame's. Eggs and bacon, grilled sardines, marmalade—nothing comes amiss to his active fork. Landscapes ? He doesn't give a fig for them. But the pigeonhole of his memory under P and L is primed with the subjects : Portugal, Lisbon.

“ There was the famous catastrophe in such and such a year, on which Voltaire wrote a now unjustly forgotten poem. Why didn't we bring the works of Voltaire ? Arouet would be useful for our speeches. But one can't think of everything. For there will be speeches and receptions. What a bore ! ” To keep up his courage he takes some more Dundee marmalade and vaunts its bitter-sweet qualities.

“ It's highly stomachic. A deputation will certainly come to fetch us on board the ship. But a deputation of what ? ”

“ What matter ? All deputations are alike. The

most solemn, the most convinced, that's to say, the most boring of the whole bunch are invariably chosen. There will be a banquet too. Heavens, what torture! Will ladies be invited? You'll see they won't be. Or if they are they'll be ancient official frumps! Alas: for there's fine flesh and blood in Portugal. Don't forget 'The Portuguese Nun.' " He continues to the accompaniment of bread and butter, sandwiches and tea. "There will be toasts. Have you thought of that, my friend? Miserable youth, the toasts are your job! How are you to improvise a response? Take some paper. Here, the back of the menu. Firstly, thanks to the distinguished company. Ah, I have it! There will be members of all the academies—Letters, Medicine, and Sculpture. Stick them all in—there is sure to be something of everything in the pie. Tell them they are all geniuses: so they must be because they welcome us. What else? That Portugal is the flower of countries and that they are the flower of the Portuguese. The flower, spiritually, of course. Academicians, wherever they spring from, are not intoxicating, physically speaking. Now put me in a sentence or two really touching. You can do it capitally when you want, for all your pointed little nose. A few trills—not too much—and warble me a little on the following: all our life we have dreamed of Portugal and Lisbon. We were determined not to die without seeing these favoured banks, these happy towns, this people blessed by heaven and earth in unison. But our dreams were far below the truth, from which we shall carry away a lasting sense of amazement. Here, a little Baedeker, some historical details, and the monuments. Now, the great man. Camoens, the author of the *Lusiades*. No one has read the *Lusiades*: it is a masterpiece, and masterpieces don't need to be read—their hall-mark is that they last for ever and are good

for nothing. Still, don't make me say that I adore the *Lusiades* and keep it beside me at night. The folk who invite us to lunch are liberals: maybe they can't stand Camoens! Imagine a Portuguese in the days of *Cromwell* and *Hernani*, calling on our red waistcoats, and our proud and generous lions, to drink to the memory of Nicolas Boileau or Jean Racine: they would have chucked the plates at his classic features. So be prudent about Camoens—two lines. And then, I will give you a tip. During lunch make your neighbour talk. Find out what are the opinions of the majority. Ask the names of those present. Don't be afraid to get the names written down and correctly spelt. A great point, when one speaks of anyone, is to be able to pronounce his name with familiarity. Write me a careful catalogue of all the illustrious personages whose jaws are working with ours, together with their name, faith, distinctions, persecutions.

“Secondly, and to conclude——”

“Long live the Portuguese Republic!”

“Wretched youth! You want to get us hurled into a ditch! We are not fanatics. We are men of letters. True, our aspirations are liberal; but we are well brought up and keep our flag at the bottom of our portmanteau.”

At this moment the Duenna comes up.

“Quick! You can see the town.”

He wipes his moustaches and kisses her hand.

On deck, in hierarchical order, as it might be on the stage, the actors are ranged. A little in front are the stars B—— and G——; behind them, the utilities; finally, the supers. Flanked by the stars, France looks like the poet of the company: he smiles absently, and is amiable and willing. He is pondering over an epithet. He is ready to take the chair at anything, anywhere, from the fabric committee of a cathedral, with the archbishop, to a board of army examiners, with the general, or an



anarchist meeting. He is full of reflections, generalities and anecdotes, and with his crafty, well-worn, librarian's eyes scrutinizes the horizon as though he were deciphering a text or blue-pencilling a page. The customs house, a great, massive, square building like a barracks, coloured Italian-fashion with tender green, rose and lilac, rises from the water, and now we make out the jetty, the harbour, and the town built up on the sides of the hill. Houses, bright with majolica, blue, pink, and green, are covered with mantles of wine-coloured flowers, and Lisbon looks like a virtuous town that has got up early after a good night.

A motor-boat brings out the medical and customs-house officers. One of the latter shows us a newspaper with Anatole France's portrait on the front page. He compares the picture with the original.

For one who knows Latin, Portuguese is an easy tongue. The illustrious French writer is welcomed in lyric terms. Our steward says to me:

"You won't be coming back this evening?"

"Yes, we shall."

"But," says the man, pointing to Anatole France, "he's going to make a *coup d'état*."

"A *coup d'état*?!"

"Oh, we know all about it. It's Franco, the dictator, who was exiled; now he's come back to his country."

Now I understand the coldness of our relations with these English. France! Franco! They have taken M. Bergeret for a dictator.

Another motor-boat. This time it is the delegation, with the President of the Lisbon Academy, who is also the leader of the Republican Party. He is no longer young, wears spectacles, and his features are as threadbare as his coat. He talks softly and pronounces a kind of homily in a churchy tone. France embraces him.

"I have come here on purpose for you," he says. Does he even know his name? The Academician's spectacles are misty with emotion. The boat is very small, the company of actors not having been foreseen, but the throbbing nutshell lands us safely and we find ourselves instantly in a square surrounded with arcades, in the centre of which stands a monument to the glory of Don Pedro, with marble elephants and allegories. We follow the Academician under the arcades. "Behind this column the citizens who shot the king and his son were placed. The royal carriage was there, a few steps off."

But the Academician, like ourselves, is pressed for time, and wants us to see all the beauties of the town. Landaus await us and we drive to the Town Hall, like a wedding bean-feast, France and the Duenna on the seat of honour, the Academician and myself opposite them. The great hall is hung with portraits of the Braganzas. The Academician points out the pictures:

"This is one, and that is another. They were fat enough, so we killed them." Then passing to the portrait of Manuel: "This one is not yet quite fatted up."

We go through the popular quarters where there are fine gardens full of colonial plants, and visit a church which is the Lusitanian Pantheon. The spectacle of coffins with glass lids is a horrid one. Through the glass you see the poor tyrants tightly corsetted in their uniforms, with faces puffed and of an unwholesome ivory colour. Carrion flies buzz on top of the coffin lids. Daylight seems even purer and cleaner than before after this sight. France admires the women of the people going barefoot to the fountains. "How lovely are they, those feet that have never felt the constraint of shoes! They are like the feet of antique statues."

The good Academician apologizes for his town. They are still very backward. It is the fault of the clergy and

of the royalty. But happily the reign of obscurantism begins to pale. The people are learning to read. Anatole France is translated. Soon democracy will reign. Then everyone will wear shoes. The scandal will cease.

Anatole France has taken in nothing of this democratic warbling, for he is wholly occupied with observing the grace of the women carrying water. They hold the urns on their heads, and their arms form a harmonious curve like the handles of amphoræ.

In a shamed voice the worthy Academician deploras the barbarous and servile custom of carrying heavy weights on the head, thereby compressing the seat of thought. But the day will come when water will be distributed to all, mechanically, with scientific and republican precision. "Dreadful!" shudders France.

Now we are at the top of the hill. The uniform walls of a barrack-like building stretch out on the chalk, suggesting a country house in Provence. From the roof, brilliant with tiles, a banner floats: it is the Palace of Las Necessitades, the palace of the Kings of Portugal.

Noon strikes, and the guard at the gate of the modest castle is changed. A brass band massacres the national anthem. The officer commanding the guard, thanks to the paper, recognizes Anatole France and the Academician, and orders his men to present arms. The novelist is amazed at this act of homage at the palace gates.

As we go down the hill, the Academician explains: "That officer is one of our men. He is a republican. All the army is republican."

"Then why do you delay to declare a republic?" asks Anatole France.

"The fruit is ripe, but England is there! We are one of her colonies."

A pause. The wheels turn in the dust. The Portuguese adds, as if with regret:

" You French are there too."

" We French ? "

" Oh, not you, Master ; but your Government. It supports the Braganzas' Government. A family question, on account of Louis Philippe."

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### *BANQUET : MASTERS AND MUMMERS*

The Lusitanian Academy offers a banquet to Anatole France, member of the French Academy. Scene : a hotel close to the port. In the large room where table d'hôte is served the regular customers have been shoved into the corners, and a couple of dozen places have been laid in the centre, the cloth resplendent with roses and peonies. The hotel-keeper is French, and so is the cooking. The azure light, that enters from the window, aggressive as a buzzing swarm of bees, brings a smack of salt and fever from the river in which it has bathed, and makes a fret-work of mother-o'-pearl on the ceiling. Our hosts, the Portuguese Immortals, are little men, with little looks. Threadbare frock-coats and wandering glances from behind spectacles bespeak the poverty, severity, timidity, and disinterestedness of university life. Their foreheads are dreamy, under sad, colourless hair. They are learned men, men of science, and poets. For the most part they belong to the Opposition and have come to the luncheon as to a conspirators' meeting. The banquet is an act of faith, for which they have spent all their savings.

Introductions take place. For every man Anatole France has a special word and a special smile. We take our seats, in order preordained ; but there are fewer places than guests, for the company of actors has found its way into the banqueting hall. And they have done well. What a sad business is a feast without women—

most of all a university feast ! One might be at the feast of St. Charlemagne ! Chairs are fetched and places laid. France in choice terms welcomes Thalia and Melpomene. He offers the place on his right to the Duenna, that on his left to Mme. B——, and the other actors and actresses fit themselves in among the feasters, flowerets in a wreath of everlastings.

The bill of fare is plain, but it has been garlanded with epithets. Thus, the tasteless whiting is "Merlan à la Bergeret." The sweetbread is "à la Thais," the chicken "à la Jérôme Coignard," and the ice "à la Reine Pédaque." Luncheon begins with much clatter of knife and fork, and the decanters of wine are rapidly emptied. Abstinence was the order of the day on the boat, where most of the passengers, on pretext of doctoring their stomachs or their livers, drank nothing but water. Now they are making up for lost time. The stage, unsuspecting of this heady Portuguese wine, which has the colour and strength of marble, is taking its revenge. Soon comes the turn of sealed bottles, whose wine recalls that of the Rhone, and has the same taste of saltpetre and bees as have Hermitage and Tavel. Tongues begin to wag freely. Anatole France inquires of the Academy about the "Portuguese Nun" who so well expressed love's adorable torments. Is her portrait extant ? In what convent was the poor bird immured ? The Academy does not know. The Academy is astounded at the puerility of these questions. The Academy is all for politics.

The President of the Academy feels moved to declare that once Portugal is freed from royalty and superstition, the horrors of the convent will be abolished. Anatole France accepts the declaration and politely wishes for the dawn of better times. Then he goes on telling naughty stories to his fair neighbour.

"In those days convent parlours were real *salons*.



Plays were acted there, and magic lantern shows given, and there was music, and dainty little refreshments were served. But best of all were the moments spent at the convent railings."

The moment for the toasts stops the floodgates of such light talk. We push back our plates, adopt a bored or at least serious air, and prepare for the President of the Lusitanian Academy's speech. Over ravaged fruit dishes and a forest of gaping bottles, the Immortal hurls the periods of a political harangue. He is proud to welcome Anatole France. "Anatole France is France, France is the Revolution. A day will come when, thanks to Anatole France and France, the Revolution will burst out in Portugal." We drink to the coming Portuguese Revolution. France rises smiling and bows. "Your words, my dear President, have gone straight to my heart. Embarking for the New World I left my native shores with regret. But I could not die without having seen with my own eyes the beautiful stream of the Tagus, whose splendours my mother celebrated for me in a song that still rings in my ears. This city of Lisbon that, like the phœnix, arose the more brilliant from its ashes. . . . The native land of the illustrious Camoens and the bold Pizarro. . . . I desired to greet so many men distinguished at once for their civic ardour and for their erudition. You, my dear President, who incarnate in a high degree the critical sense . . ." and here follows the catalogue of names written down beforehand on the back of my menu. At the mention of each name, the Immortal mentioned-rises, bows and wipes his eyes with his napkin. France returns the bow and returns to his list of honour. Applause. Toasts. It is frightfully hot. From the port arises an obstinate, irritating dust. Their potations have made the actors forget the object of the banquet and they imagine it is to them it has been offered. Pro-

fitting by a pause, B——, the tragedian, rises, glass in hand and draped with his napkin, like Augustus' toga in *Cinna*. His cheeks are too ruddy, his voice too rich with wine, and he barrel-organs forth :

“ Members of the Academy of Barcelona, in the name of the *Comédie française* we thank you for the cordiality of your welcome. In acclaiming us, you acclaim French literature. We go to spread the marvels of the literature among the barbarian peoples. But we shall never forget Barcelona ! Barcelona, thy name is for ever engraved in our hearts and in our memories. When we return to France, we shall tell the French how Barcelona loves us. And they will be proud ! ”

Having finished this wholly unasked for speech, the tragedian empties his glass and sits down. Stupor seizes the banqueters. The Immortals exchange anguished glances. Then all their eyes supplicating their President, he rises after momentary reflexion, visibly embarrassed.

“ Sir,” he says in an ironic tone, “ we are infinitely thankful to you for the kind things you have said about us. Your eulogium of Barcelona was as ingenious as it was to the point. Indeed I have heard it said, by those who have been there, that Barcelona and Lisbon greatly resemble each other. . . . ”

\* \* \* \* \*

### THE LION OF BELFORT

A discussion at table : which is the most beautiful statue in Paris ? Opinion is divided. The Ingénue votes for the monument to Musset outside the Théâtre français ; B—— for the Obelisk. The Delacroix in the Luxembourg garden gets several votes. The Duenna is for the *Gloria Victis* in the Tuileries. France is on to her at once :

“ Fie, fairest lady ! Hide your want of modesty. You

let your lovely eyes rest on such perversities, and actually avow it ? ”

“ What ! Alsace-Lorraine, our country, and the dying soldier—is that what you call perverse ? ”

“ My child, everything that preaches to man the hate of man is obscene.”

“ If that is the case, we’re not badly off for obscenities. We have museums full of them ! ”

“ You are in the right. It is on pictures of battles that fig-leaves should be stuck instead of on to Venuses and Cupids. That is to what Christianity has brought us : the sweet images that inspire our veins with creative desire are proscribed as criminal, and at every street corner we put up statues of generals who have turned the earth into a cemetery. We should be shut up in a mad-house ! ”

“ And you, Master, what is your favourite statue ? ”

“ You’ll laugh at me, but here goes ! One must have the courage of one’s loves. My favourite statues—for there are several, twin sisters, and I can never pass them without being moved—are those Egyptian women whom Garnier set up to hold lamps at the entrance to the Opera. What exquisite figures they have ! How proud are their slave’s breasts. I have been their fervent admirer since long ago. Oh, I contain myself—I stop short of extravagances ! And the rich colour of them ! That Pompeian green makes a noble *déshabillé*.”

But G—— always tragic, and always a quarter of hour behind in the conversation, declares in melancholy tones :

“ To me, the most beautiful monument in Paris is the Lion of Belfort.”

There is a general outcry.

“ Yes, the Lion of Belfort. It is a simple idea, terse, heraldic, patriotic. The ragamuffin and the little work-girl can catch, as well as the Academician, the sense of

that king of the desert, wounded and roaring. When I pass by it, I think of the martyrdom of Alsace-Lorraine."

"My dear Roscius," said France, "you have treasures of illusion in your breast. You embellish the commonest of objects. Ah, I envy you! I have often looked at the lion disfiguring that charming gateway of Paris where the women sculptured on the front of the old customs-house seem to be playing at hoops with their Louis XVI bucklers. Deuce take me if I can find what you see there. Up to now that fat old thing has always looked to me like a pen-wiper. You know, one of those little astrakhan poodles with bead eyes. I took the Lion of Belfort for a portentous paperweight!"

\* \* \* \*

MAY 4TH

Rain. Cold. We meet the *Araguaya*. We meet. We salute. We pass.

\* \* \* \*

#### GREAT MEN'S GAMES

With the help of his antique signet-ring he has been teaching the Ingénue to make seals of different colours. You take two sticks of sealing-wax, one silver, one red. First you take the imprint of the cameo on the red, then, cutting away the wax all round, you renew the effect with the silver wax which makes as it were a frame. The effect is simple, charming, and unexpected. B—— finds him in the midst of his demonstration.

"What! You, the most illustrious of our Illustrious, waste your time in such trifles!"

"All great men have had a keen taste for puerilities." And in a scornful tone Anatole France continues:

"Scipio and Lælius played at ducks and drakes by the

seashore. Augustus, the great Augustus whom you embody with such nobility of soul—‘Let us be friends, Cinna’—Augustus, the master of the whole world, played at knucklebones and ball. Gustavus Adolphus too after his victories played at blind man’s buff with his officers. The great cardinal, the terrible Richelieu, amused himself by jumping. Malebranche joined in the games of the choir-boys at the Oratory. Malesherbes, who defended Louis XVI, excelled at making paper bags.”

“Paper bags?”

“Yes, you know, that you blow up with air and then burst with a pop, like the explosion of a mine. The great Balzac had a number of innocent little games and found much recreation in them. And I, unworthy as I am, am teaching this nymph to seal letters. It is a sort of virtue.”

\* \* \* \* \*

#### MAY 5. MADEIRA

We have stopped at Madeira, shall spend the morning there, and after lunch put to sea again. So we are put off in boats and reach an emerald isle, whose head is crowned with mother-o’-pearl clouds. The island is an extinct volcano, and where once spouted fiery lava, now sprout the flora of the old world and the new, as it were a swaying, scented basket of flower and fruit, rocked on the azure waves.

A comic discussion arises in our boat: to whom does Madeira belong? To Spain, say some. Others maintain to England. Perhaps it is an independent state. We consult a guide-book. Surprise, not unmixed with disappointment: Madeira belongs to Portugal. The English took it in 1801, but gave the isle back to the Portuguese in 1814.



Anatole France maintains that all the sciences are illusion—except, of course, the science of love. But in his opinion the most vain of all vain sciences is geography.

“The brain of man is light and forgetful and narrow. Why fill it with barbarous names that evoke nothing pleasant in the mind? Let our brow be fevered and our grey matter be agitated by memories of the heart. It is by travelling that one learns geography. And then one must know how to travel. For what is travelling? Changing your place? By no means. Travelling is changing your illusions and your prejudices.”

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#### *THE GEOGRAPHY OF SENTIMENT*

He has a friend in Paris who is an ardent apostle of such sentimental geography. When holiday-time comes round—for he is a most worthy functionary of the state—he selects a region. Then he goes through it, town by town. Not content with the local curiosities and the rivers, he carries his inquiry into the cookery of the country, the wine for which it is renowned, and the damsels of easy virtue; and from his studious travels brings back many curious observations. For instance, he will tell you: “Avignon is a toothsome town—thoroughly papal. At such and such a restaurant they give you crayfish in cockleshells that alone are worth making the pilgrimage. And in an alley near the ramparts is a collection of little darlings who in a trice make you feel the sweetness of the countryside. They will teach you more in one night than all the pictures in the museum, all the archives, and all the books in the library put together.” By contrast you must hear him deplore the poor cheer of a certain town in Picardy, where table and the rest alike are bad,

the meal and the maiden both tough. A truly profitable and unpedantic method of travelling, declares France.

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#### THE VALET'S LESSON

Another geographical anecdote. "A certain learned man had the reputation of being the most skilful cartographer in England. He had published a universal atlas and knew the globe like his pocket-book. But on paper only. One evening, having drunk a glass or two extra, he lost himself in a wood close to his native town. 'What!' cried his harsh-tongued simpleton of a servant. 'You write about the whole world, and you don't know where you are three miles from home?'"

\* \* \* \* \*

#### FUNCHAL

We visit Funchal, the capital of the island, tucked into the bottom of the crater in an amphitheatre of peaks and mountain-tops. Sumptuous villas rearing their creamy walls on the basalt rock, from which tumbling cascades splash, remind you, in little, of Switzerland and the Riviera. The scene also recalls those little models of landscapes with all the geological formations marked in a few feet of bulging cardboard, picked out with bright colours and scraps of mica. From below, there are no remarkable sights. From above, under the clouds tattered by the sea wind, it is a fantastic city of black granite.

Filthy children and picturesque women offer us lace-work of innumerable differing design, in which there is far more design as a rule than material: tablecloths and table-centres and slips. These intricacies, result of labour antlike in its patience, come, we are told, from Teneriffe,

and are executed, thread by thread, by the natives, with superhuman skill.

The ladies throw themselves on the work like falcons on a dove. They compare notes, make calculations, bargain. But the bargain struck, we find that everything has to be begun anew, for the sellers refuse French money with disdain, demanding English or Portuguese.

"That," says France, "gives a poor idea of our credit abroad."

Says an Englishman, doubtless to be polite: "Your credit is all in things of the mind—in your books and your pictures."

"I understand," replied France, "you take the colonies, and leave us the soul. Who has the lion's share?"

\* \* \* \* \*

#### *NATIONALISM IN HEAVEN*

We go through the church—an ancient church, but without character, shadow, or mystery. The sun strikes clean through it, from door to apse, with a brilliance unpleasant to our Gallican eyes.

"One feels uncomfortable here." It is M. Bergeret who makes the observation. "In these sanctuaries where one recognizes nobody, a man has no sense of his faith. Tell me, pray, who is that archangel on horseback? Is it St. George or St. Michael? Archangels are as like one another as peas. Yet in the Hundred Years War St. George took sides with 'the tailies.' That's what they called the English, who were said to have tails behind like the devil. Maybe the legend arose from some specially hairy Godam kilted like the Scotch. The wind of the battle must have puffed up his kilt—but this is a point on which history is still obscure. What is certain is that blessed St. George fought on the side of the English, while

blessed St. Michael did doughty deeds for the French. If I felt sure of that caracoling cavalier up there being he who appeared to Joan of Arc on a May morning amid the fair flowers in her father's garden, I would cheerfully do him homage.

"And what do you think of these madonnas, got up Spanish fashion, with lace mantilla and crinkly brown hair, embroidered flowery shawl, crinoline, and richly ornamented skirt? They look more like Carmencita than the mother of my God. Give them but the fan and the cigarette! No, they don't inspire me with confidence—intriguing, impudent coquettes that they are. For all their trickeries they don't offer a scrap of heavenly greeting. I remain faithful to the madonna of my village."

"Your village!"

"Yes—Paris."

"And your parish?"

"The Louvre: there is no lack of fair madonnas there."

\* \* \* \* \*

#### ON TASTING

On leaving the church we are taken to an inn to taste the wine that has made the name of Madeira popular throughout the world. The inn, to be sure, is a building on an extensive scale with ample halls full of echoes, ripolin paint, and chairs and tables of Austrian bent-wood. On the wall hang German prints, photographs of the Holy Land, and Bible texts, while the tessellated floor is decorated with esparto rugs. Not the smallest object of local manufacture is to be seen, and the barrack-room furniture, uniform frames, texts, piety and cleanliness give off an invincibly desolate atmosphere. How can anyone drink here? You might as well make merry in a sanatorium or the board-room of a temperance association.

The waiters, in French with a German accent, enumerate the varieties of Madeira—dry, sweet, malmsey and so forth—and pour it into glasses made in Bohemia. Dry, sweet, or malmsey, the Madeira is a disappointment. What we drink in France under the same name is better. Moreover, the price is anything but sweet. Further, payment has to be made in English money.

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### *POSTCARDS*

We choose postcards, scribble a few words, and stick on stamps of the island: they will be evidence of our stop.

Anatole France does his postal *pœna*, with that mixture of affectation and impudent fun that he puts into everything. He complains of the pen, which scratches and spits. He complains of the ink, which is too pale. Someone lends him a fountain-pen. He uses it awkwardly. There, now he has made a blot! Why has he not a swan's-quill pen? Or at least a goose-quill? He touches up the blot into a lovely daisy's heart. "A blot?" says he. "To Bridoisson, it means a trial. To the rest of us, a signature." The Master does not rack his brains over the matter. He chooses a simple commonplace phrase and, according to the quality of the recipient, sprinkles his formula with epithets and mythology. For the second class he will put: "We are making a lovely voyage. The sea is calm." For the first, he will add some flourishes: "Neptune, up to now, has been propitious to us, and this bay which ripens Madeira's bitter wine might serve Venus for her shell." Then he signs with much care, his name curving like a Louis XV balustrade with a proud flourish at the end. The Duenna watches his little game, her hands folded over her bag.



"And you, dear Thalia, are you sending no postcards? Have you left no friends in Europe?"

"Oh yes. They will get their little view of Madeira, too."

Whereupon she extracts an ample packet of them from the bag explaining:

"A long experience of tours has taught me that nothing is so tiresome as this postcard nuisance. First, you have to buy them and, abroad, you are always cheated on the exchange. Then besides your money you lose your time hunting for pen and ink in uncomfortable cafés in a horrid crowd. Besides which you are often caught napping—either you don't feel in the mood, or else you forget someone.

"So, before leaving, I always procure in Paris a complete set of the views of the countries I expect to travel through. There is a shop in the Rue de Richelieu that makes a speciality of it and always has a good stock. You can find the whole world on postcards there. If you want them ready written and stamped, it comes a bit dearer; but how convenient! Look at my views of Madeira. They are just as authentic as yours. See: 'Best wishes.' 'I am thinking of you here.' When I pack, I put in a packet of politeness just as I do my soap, tooth-wash, and eau-de-Cologne. What do you say to that?"

"What do I say, fairest creature? I repeat the words of Scripture: 'Be praised, O my God, who hast hidden this from the great and revealed it to the innocent.'"

And he kisses her hand.

\* \* \* \* \*

### THE TOBOGGAN

Why do they insist on tugging us up this cliff? The toy tramway pants its way through orange groves and

vineyards. Now we are at the top. Not for long though ; we are to come down again on our spines, in sledges, according to the custom of the country. It is a rite that all travellers must accomplish. Now, as with other things, there are sledges and sledges. The sledges of Madeira resemble but slightly those adorable little swan-necked boats on runners, once dear to the beauties of Trianon. These are common boxes without springs, in which two badly planed planks serve for seats fore and aft. A push, and the box rushes down a slope cobbled like our primitive villages with stones as prominent as a cat's nose. The guide, placed in front, restrains the leaps of the groaning vehicle by jamming his heels in between the cobbles.

Anatole France offers the place of honour to the Duenna. I sit on the other plank facing the couple. The toboggan starts and plunges downhill in a furious and, above all, joggly course, engendering about the same emotion as a switchback at a country fair. But the Duenna shrieks like an osprey. Her green turban flutters tragically in the wind. Surely she must have taken a prize for trills at the conservatoire. Her vain terrors fill the azure air. Her arms encircle the author's waist. Even so did the fair Europa cling to the horns of the Olympian bull. Along the edge of the track, under the trees, are a swarm of urchins who fling monstrous camellias, the size of cabbages, at us, as at some religious procession. Not gratis, however, these sweet-smelling showers. The flower-throwers yell for "reis." But we have no "reis," only French *sous*. I scatter a few coins, that they hurl back with disgust, pursuing us with sonorous insults of which, not having the language of the country, we lose ninety per cent.

Suddenly at a corner our guide brakes the sledge so violently that we are almost flung out of the box. The

rascal has chosen his moment admirably at a place where the cliff breaks down precipitously from an unrailed platform to where the sea foams over reefs hundreds of feet below. Let the blackguard move an inch to scratch his fleas, and over we go into eternity. He holds out his sweaty right claw to Anatole France, as it were to say: "My tip or——!" Visibly embarrassed, the Master scrutinizes our guide's mocking features and the sparkle of the sea in its jewel-box of rock. The Duenna shrieks no more, having used up all her vocal resources. Esther's swoon is the performance given now. Her head rests weakly on the Master's shoulder, like a field flower wounded by the billhook: the two blonde locks of her wig mingle with the silver beard.

"Oh, the black-aviced fellow! The nasty precipice!" murmurs M. Bergeret fumbling for his purse. "How much must I give the fellow? It's a regular trap!"

Will he out once more with that thousand-franc note of his that is never changed? It is that note that has been pretentiously deployed over piles of saucers—or so malicious and intimate tongues report—like a mirage, in the cafés of France, Italy, Greece, and Turkey, only to be thrust back with alacrity. But here there can be no emulation. There is no rival to step forward and pay. It is he who occupies the host's place in the sledge. It is under his silken beard that the guide thrusts a greedy hand, as that of a thirsty man beneath the fountain's gush.

In the present case the fountain is slow to cough up. The Master's eye fixes me with a note of interrogation. He, who knows so many pleasant and useless things, is wholly ignorant of the tariff of tips. And I reflect on the adventure of Condorcet, that very practised mathematician. He knew all the numbers, but he did not know the number of eggs needed for an omelette for one. So

he ordered a dozen and was guillotined. And well he deserved it.

Our guide is not so black as he seems. A modest republican louis produces on him the effect of a peck of oats on a jackass. He plunges forward again with our sliding box on the right road. The scare over, France, the while pocketing money and purse, evokes the legend of the sirens.

"If we had taken the plunge, fairest mine, you would have found yourself thoroughly at home with those enchantresses. But what about me? I should have stuck to you like a leech. I should have hung on to your lovely skirts and willy-nilly we should have made the eternal voyage together. With you, my charmer, eternity would seem a lightning flash."

But the Duenna is still all of a fluster. She gives naught for mythology, and roundly declares that she won't be caught again. The expedition is nothing less than a swindle. If there were judges in Madeira the guide would be guillotined. But Madeira is a mere cave of brigands.

"They don't have the guillotine here, my siren. They are terribly behind the times!"

"What savages!"

Lunch at the hotel where we tasted the wine of the island. Neither the table nor the talk is memorable.

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#### ABROAD, LONG LIVE THE KING

From the sea the sirens of the *Amazon* bellow. We put off in boats, to find the deck swarming with those obstinate sellers of Teneriffe embroidery, manufactured in Germany. A French passenger has bought a tablecloth, and a quarrel takes place over the payment for it

with an interchange of insults in French and Portuguese worthy of two fishwives, watched by the immovable captain with his immovable pipe between his lips. Now the anchor is up and by way of parting the salesman of Madeira slaps the Frenchman in the face. The captain withdraws his pipe from his lips and through the smoke spits out two or three words. Instantly two colossal sailors appear from nowhere, seize the insolent merchant and roll him, with no more effort than if they were playing football, into the bottom of the hold.

The *Amazon* is almost under way when a motor-boat dashes in pursuit of her, whence gesticulate persons in uniform: the authorities of Madeira! To these authorities the captain makes a sign that he will allow them on board to say their say. Although extremely uniformed, they protest but humbly. They have come to demand that their compatriot may be set free.

The captain answers between two vehement puffs of smoke. His sermon, for such it is, is translated to us.

"There"—he points to the island—"over there is Madeira. That's Portugal. If one of the cads who infest the port insults a tourist, that's not my business. But here"—he stamps with his foot on the deck—"here, is England. I know nothing of your governors or consuls. I'm governor here! The assailant will beg the passenger's pardon and won't demand anything at all. If he refuses, he'll come with us to Buenos Ayres and then to England: travelling develops good manners."

In full view of crew and passengers, the wretched pedlar of Madeira mumbles a few words, and is taken off on the motor-boat pursued by hoots. France remarks:

"On a French boat our compatriot would have quite likely been stuck into the bottom of the hold, to teach him not to make a fuss. An English ship is a monarchy. I



am republican—but on a journey, I prefer monarchy to anarchy ! ”

\* \* \* \* \*

### *COSMOGRAPHY AND THE PASSIONS*

One of the rare distractions on board is to set your watch at noon as counterjumpers do theirs by the toy cannon in the Palais Royal.

The Duenna asks him to explain the variations in the hour :

“ Why do we gain or lose a day in going to Buenos Ayres or coming back ? ”

He explains the antipodes to her after the gallant fashion of Fontenelle. The idea that there are men and women the other side of the globe flabbergasts her.

“ Are we on the top now, or underneath ? Is it perfectly certain ? If we were upsidedown, we should see it.”

Patiently he makes answer and during luncheon renews his demonstration with the aid of an orange and a lemon which figure us. Sun and moon. The Duenna ends by peeling the sun and putting a pip in the lecturer’s mouth with the words :

“ All that is tarradiddles, invented to annoy kids at school.”

“ Tarradiddles ! When learned astronomers——”

“ Astronomers are human beings just as we are. I knew one at the observatory of Paris who had a super at the Gymnase as his mistress. What an ass she made of the poor man ! ”

“ Ah, that’s a decisive argument against science that Brunetière didn’t think of ! ”

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THURSDAY, MAY 6

The painter Z—— claims to have seen the peak of Teneriffe. A games committee is elected.

\* \* \* \* \*

*THE PASSAGE OF THE LINE*

With battles and masquerades do we celebrate the passage of the line. It recalls slightly the Feast of Fools, and the St. Charlemagne and the Carnival, too. Only our saturnalia take place in a hot-house and their character is Puritan.

From the midshipmite to the cook, the whole crew is on deck. The younger passengers mix with the sailors. Prizes are offered, and the ladies will be the judges.

The captain has at length discovered Anatole France. He has so often been told that this elderly man, so undistinguished in his clothes and so modest in his tips, is famous throughout the world, that he has offered him the camp-stool of honour at his right hand. We arrange ourselves anyhow, behind the bigwigs. The fair ladies fan themselves. The young men fancy themselves. Youths in bathing-costume strive one against the other up a soapy pole.

M. Bergeret lets loose his anecdotes and adages upon the captain, as the latter smokes his obstinate pipe:

“This is by no means new to us, captain. The custom of celebrating great events, and among those events a change of hemisphere, by feats of prowess, jests and wagers is as old as the world. Thus the divine Homer—”

M. Bergeret shoots a line from the Odyssey into the face of the old sea-dog, who removes his pipe, salutes, takes it up again, and lets fly a cloud in honour of Helen's bard.

“Thus, Virgil——”

This time, a speech from the *Æneid*. A fresh salute, and a fresh puff in honour of the singer of Mantua.

Follow general considerations on the feasts of antiquity. With the Romans there were the *Charisti*. Anatole France's learned hand grasps the gold-braided sleeve, as he supplicates his neighbour to tell him if in the world there is a sweeter name than that of *Charistos*. But the captain regards him anxiously and works his camp-stool to a more prudent distance.

"Would you not say to an impassioned lady at the very height of your passion: 'You are my *Charistos*'?"

The captain spits his disgust.

"In the time of Augustus prayers were said in all good families to the new god, just as in our provinces people still say grace. At the end of the evening meal, before separating to seek the sweet oblivion of sleep, the priest took the holy vessel and scattered some drops of pure wine, with the words: 'Blessings and health to you all. Blessings and health to Cæsar, the father of our country.'"

But now the wrestlers hold the field. Anatole France needs no prompting to find abundant antique comparisons. His tongue turns and returns his similes like so many pastilles.

"How elegant and voluptuous are these arabesques of the body! Christianity has plucked such carnal splendours from our life. Happily the taste for games is bringing us gently back to antiquity."

Out of politeness the captain, who does not know a word of French, murmurs something, perhaps an account of his voyages. France, who does not know a word of English, follows the recital with scrupulous attention. He nods solemnly. He approves, without understanding. Henceforth conversation is engaged and will develop warmly, alternatively, impenetrably. Each will politely

declaim his strophe in turn. A dialogue between pipe and pastille.

We proceed to the traditional baptism of novices who have not yet crossed the Equator. Runic formulæ without meaning are pronounced over them and huge lumps of men, disguised as magicians, plunge them into a tub.

This ceremony disturbs the French Academician. Will it be inflicted on all who have not yet crossed the line? He begins to develop symptoms of headache: the atmosphere is so heavy, the light so brilliant. But he is reassured. The rite is confined to men of the crew.

\* \* \* \* \*

### *LICE, DON QUIXOTE, AND THE EQUATOR*

While the tubbing goes forward, he draws from his box of anecdotes a curious passage concerning Don Quixote. The knight of the melancholy countenance reveals to Sancho a decidedly original method of recognizing at sea those who have crossed the line: "To cross the line spells death to all the lice on everyone aboard. The effect is so radical that you couldn't find a single louse in the ship if you paid its weight in gold." He asks whether the captain has noticed this phenomenon? Its weight in gold! To be sure, the weight can't be great.

By the aid of an interpreter the lousy story is put to the captain. He takes it ill, and declares apoplectically that there have never been lice on an English ship.

"But tell him that I did not mean to offend him! It is a learned jest—an historical story of the sixteenth century."

"Neither in the sixteenth century nor to-day!"

The effect is deplorable. Happily champagne is served. As the corks pop, M. Bergeret quotes Camoens, and Admastor, king of the tempest.

After dinner, we have a grand costume and masked ball to which the whole crew is invited. Half of them, dressed up as women, languish and revolve giddily in the arms of the other half. These false sultanas have underlinen and flowers and floating hair and jewels. The sailors bring these dubious elegancies on board with their slops in company with the Bible and the photograph of their mothers and sweethearts. They serve once on the way out and once on the way back, but that is enough to relieve the tension. The dresses are well made, and the ladies full of easy vigour.

On the stroke of midnight the captain pushes his way into the dishevelled circle of satyrs and bacchantes, and holds his watch aloft like a monstrance. Order reigns instantaneously. Around their chief, dancers, male and female, fall swiftly into line, sweaty, unkempt, obedient, and stand at attention. Folly is dead. Two by two they march to where the flag floats on the poop, and there with one voice, at once pious and vinous, the sailors in their skirts and wigs and masks raise *God save the King*.

\* \* \* \* \*



*PHILOSOPHY*

A very young, very snub-nosed lady, much powdered and rather flighty, declares: "Bergson is the greatest philosopher of modern times."

"Are you sure?" asks Anatole France placidly. And thereupon tells the following story.

"One day in England, Voltaire, who was much bitten with metaphysics, said to a learned man of the country: 'Clarke is a far greater mathematician than Newton.'

"'That may be,' replied the Briton coldly. 'It is as if you were to say that one plays better at ball than the other.'"

The giddy little puss is not convinced.

"Don't you believe in philosophy, Master?"

"That is a point on which I am at one with the gentlemen of Port Royal: 'We hold that all philosophy is not worth one hour of labour.' Or as Pascal says: 'To jest at philosophy is truly to be a philosopher.' And that was in the time of Descartes! Studies, that imagine causes in order to explain effects, empty, exhaust, and cloud the mind without fortifying it. When M. Jourdain's professor of philosophy teaches him to say U, he is really as subtle as our Bergson.

"What proves the infirmity of that science is the uncertainty and confusion of its language. Philosophers disdain the vulgar tongue. They create terms that the vernacular disdains in its turn. Are they, like the oracles, afraid of being understood? Do they hurl themselves into gibberish by reason of their own impotence? It is one of their own fry who avows with a certain ingenuousness: 'Merchants, lovers, cooks and tailors are not without words for despatching their daily business. Philosophers and controversialists could end theirs, too, if they

desired to understand clearly and to be understood.' Who said that? Why, Locke!"

\* \* \* \* \*

### *HIS PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY*

"He was the most charming and the most obstinate lunatic. He believed in philosophy, or rather in his own philosophy, of which he spoke with a queer tenderness. Several examples remain in my memory and cheer my hours of melancholy. I can still hear him declaim in his dreamy voice: 'Bacon dethroned the hypothesis and its servant the syllogism. He restored induction based on observation to its full lustre and all its rights.' What do you think of that for style? Marvellously objective, isn't it? and, it must be said, somewhat unphilosophic. Induction, which mounts again on the throne aided by Bacon and observation! Admirable subject for a Prix de Rome, to be sure. For him the revolutions in philosophy were like the taking of the Bastille, the 10th of August and the September Massacres. He would discourse to you on psychology, logic, theodicy, and ethics as of persons of high rank but a little come down in the world and inclined to dote, by reason of their great age—as it might be aged, aristocratic dowagers who should become procuresses or sell little dogs or second-hand dresses. I delighted in the simple, pompous manner of this excellent visionary. Many a time have I thought of putting him in a book. He squinted; yet how noble he looked as he protested with indignation: 'Lift up our hearts and our voices! Let us avenge philosophy so cruelly calumniated!' My word, he might have been talking of his mother or his mistress, for his eyes filled with water. But he was held in suspicion, as being accused of liberalism, or gallicanism, or cartesianism, or

jansenism—not, I believe, without grounds. Once he spoke to us of the circumspect Edinburgh school——”

\* \* \* \* \*

TRAGEDY IN THE TROPICS

The heat is overwhelming and as damp as a hot-house without its brilliance. The tropics! Imagination had made a marvel of the word. We expected to be dazzled. In fact, little grey clouds, as from a split eiderdown, roll overhead, and around us is a lake of melted asphalt. Our ship cuts through this oily sticking-plaster, which closes heavily behind us. It is hardly bearable. Everything melts and sweats.

In this Turkish-bath atmosphere that rusts character and exasperates the senses, the passengers exude ill-humour. We have exhausted every topic of conversation, literary, political, and commonplace. Every amorous combination has been tried. Hatreds spring up and cliques are formed as in barracks, schools, and prisons. Passengers who had sworn eternal love cannot meet without shrinking. First we smothered each other with politeness. Now we pass without a nod.

But our tragedians still burn with stage fire. Despite the heat, the two clans remain irreconcilable. On the sweating deck they rehearse *La Tour de Nesles* before Chimène, seated on a camp-stool, while at the bow a swarm of flying-fish wakened by the cutwater leap from waves the colour of tar. “*His was a hoary and a noble head, Marguerite. And yet you have murdered him!*”

B—— is clad in white linen, like a boy got up for his first Communion. G—— is disguised as a naval officer. The little dog yelps in unison. A flying-fish grazes Marguerite de Bourgogne’s cheek, who thereupon emits an owl-like screech. We collect round the creature with

disgust. A moment ago it looked like a butterfly : now, on the deck, it is no more than a misbegotten marsh-bat.

\* \* \* \*

### *IN THE BEGINNING*

At the outset the passengers' appetite equalled their spirits. Like locusts they fell on tables groaning with meats, and all combined to praise English cookery, abundant rather than delicate. Now that we are in the neighbourhood of the line, gastronomic enthusiasm diminishes. The heat engenders odours and all dishes taste of the refrigerator. The meat has a smack of fishiness, the fish of high meat. Chickens have been flirting with lobsters ; the ham is tainted with mackerel.

In this culinary discord the Duenna is expert at devising combinations of red pepper, mustard, and paprika. Like some sorceress she prepares little messes on the edge of her plate, wielding the cruet as a choir-boy the holy vases. Good creature that she is, the priestess shares her incantations with the neighbour, who exhausts all the gems of mythology by way of thanks. By now they have formed a solid friendship. He introduces her to Casanova and Brantôme ; she teaches him how to eat asparagus without dipping his butterfly tie in the sauce. They communicate in the same spoonful of mayonnaise. There are endearments of capers and gherkins. Threads of parmesan unite their unequal beards.

\* \* \* \*

### *THE ISLE OF SEA-GULLS*

At dusk the ship almost brushed two islets that serve as a perch for innumerable sea-gulls, herring-gulls, and birds of unknown name.

The rock is covered with a thick carpet of felt like chalk

or snow, in places tinted rose and blue. Terrified by our siren, the innocent colony, already head under wing and prepared for sleep, leaps upwards like a volcano of feathers that form a clattering cloud above the ship. Shut in by the darkness and as if drunk with sleep and dizziness, for long they weave their rings and spirals round us, in a silent symphony of which the musical rhythm falls upon the water, momentarily darker and more hot and languid.

Walled in between sky and sea, our minds revert to the state of schoolchildren. The smallest fact is an event of importance. Mere nothings thrill us.

To-day the sailors have harpooned a shark, in whose stomach a whole set of fishes is found, one inside the other. It is the very gamut of voracity.

"The Almighty's goodness," murmurs France.

They have also found several tins coming from the ship's larder.

Is shark good to eat? Yes, or No? This question fills the void of two whole days.

Next, a school of porpoises excites our passionate interest. Two by two, frocked in black, like penitents, they go by dripping and gloomy.

To what nationality does the tramp there belong? Fieldglass in hand, we discuss the flag and make bets on it. Will she come near enough for us to wave at the passengers? The ship, it turns out, is German, and we salute one another courteously.

In the midst of the ocean terrestrial quarrels seem illusory. The women upon deck seem graceful and desirable. France remarks:

"From the quivering frame of a window in an express, all women seen on station platforms, or at village windows, seem goddesses. The disappearing vision gives you a little stab at the heart. 'Perhaps,' think you, 'she whom



you always seek and never find, is there ! ' And you long to get out."

\* \* \* \* \*

### *EFFEUILLANT LA MARGUERITE*

All aflame, he says to the Duenna :

" If through some trap, as on the stage, I appeared before your eyes at midnight in noble nudity, what would you do, fair charmer ? "

Then she, dry and sour :

" I always keep a revolver under my pillow."

" Prude that you are ! You are stricter, pasteboard queen of the theatre, than are real queens. A certain chamberlain of François I, Guillaume de Gouffier, dared raise his eyes to Marguerite de Valois, the monarch's sister. Since by day he could not cull the fairest of all marguerites, he penetrated by night into the princess' rooms by means of a trap-door he had cut, and would have pushed his insolence further, had she not awoken. She complained to the King, who merely laughed at her, and it is she herself who relates the episode in her *Héptameron*. Your virtue is more quick to take alarm than that of a princess of the blood. Would you have still something to lose ? Ungallant thought, both for you and for us."

\* \* \* \* \*

### *THE CONVICTS' ISLE*

A faery isle emerges from the bitter sea, clad in a verdant tunic, striped with well-trimmed paths. Here and there out of the green peep little houses of red brick, like toys. The inhabitants, clad in white linen, wave their hands at us.

" What Arcadia is that ? " we ask. " How good to

live there! Men, earth and sky, all are clean, neat, honest-looking."

"That is the island of Fernando-de-Noracha, the Cayenne of Brazil," is the answer.

Melancholy seizes us, and we dare not reply to the convicts' greeting.

\* \* \* \* \*

*COPPÉE, A HAWKER*

"Coppée is a very small poet, but he is a poet all the same. He has hardly any breath, barely enough to make a reed-pipe quaver. And he must needs stick the epic trumpet to his lips! He is only at ease in the commonplace, and sentimental foolishness is to him as water to a fish. As for bottom, there is none, not a speck of a general idea, but the sleight of hand and voluble blarney of a Paris street hawker. You know the type of rascal in broken shoes with cap pulled down over his greased lovelock who approaches you mysteriously in the dusk. He holds out, for all the world as if it were the three-card trick, a glittering object that he displays with many winks. A watch, or a ring maybe. 'Sixty francs, my lord! Perfect timekeeper—solid gold! Ten rubies! And the ring's a genuine diamond. Unique bargain! Must hurry up. Can't have the police putting their noses in. Come, my lord, fifty francs and never mind where the stuff came from.'

"It's flattering to be called 'my lord.' And then the glitter of the jewels! You say to yourself: 'It's stolen. But from whom? Why turn up your nose on that account?' So you out with the fifty-franc note, and the brilliant ring is yours. But once the hawker has vanished, the ring is no more than a horrid hoop of copper, the stone a fragment of glass, the watch a child's toy.

They lack the blather and go of the Paris street urchin. There you have the story of François Coppée.

“His truly voltairian dash remained faithful to the good poet even on his deathbed, and broke suddenly in upon the soft and devout monotony of the beads he was telling; for he was converted. He was dying of cancer and knew it. To comfort him on his supreme journey, the Cardinal of Paris had sent to Rome for a special benediction, which Coppée received with pious banter. I went to see him the same day. ‘In other days,’ he groaned, pointing to the papal telegram on his night table, amid medicine bottles and cooling drinks, ‘the bells of my parish would have rung out in honour of such a message. A spectacular procession would have been formed with aldermen in their robes and archers and the watch, to accompany with anthem and incense and cross and banner the pontifical legate. And he would have drawn the holy father’s benediction from his sweaty boot. Now, it’s a little rascal of twelve, a post office in miniature, who keeps the suffrage of the saints and the blessing of pontiffs in his satchel, jostling his marbles and his chocolates! He got a tip of five sous and went to buy a cake and cigarettes with it. Sad times, my poor France!’”

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#### PERNAMBUCO

*May 25.* The port is all beflagged. Impossible to enter. It is the anniversary of the suppression of slavery. So we ride in front of the town, a black patch on the brilliant sea, round which gambol a school of sharks. They are the most graceful creatures, impudent, lively, the picture of health, and of an exquisite shade of blue. The mother sharks, rivalling in maternal devotion the

most devoted farmyard, are everywhere at once in their search for offal; then collect their young for the feast and see to its fair distribution.

A boat brings out our letters. An address from the French colony greets us, together with a magnificent basket of fruit accompanying the message. But what are these fruits, monstrous alike in colour and in size? Save for the pineapples among them, no one knows. On being bitten, they yield a surprising taste of turpentine. No one can eat them, and they are thrown into the blue sea, while the tropical basket goes to perfume the Master's cabin.

It is only with the utmost difficulty that I get him to write a letter of thanks.

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#### AT BAHIA

Here we find a curious market for monkeys, snakes, and parrots. Birds of paradise are offered to the ladies by the yard. The little birds have been skinned and the skins with their brilliant plumage put to dry on sticks. The fantastic beauty of the outside contrasts with the gutted skin, swarming inside with vermin. To stop the corruption and save the feathery jet, you would need the taxidermist and his drugs. And what marvellous cockades and plumes for such a tiny body! In this atom, hardly bigger than a nut, such a craving for beauty that the little heart burst forth, in the azure, into this dizzy cascade of fireworks!

One of the actresses buys a little monkey, the size of a rat, with mouse-grey skin, bluish and velvety like an Angora cat. Its head is that of a vicious baby, the hands dreadful to touch, as it might be those of a foetus, already human. The minute creature shivers—with fear, cold, or

delight?—and snuggles like a marmot into the actress' breast.

Mme. B—— is ecstatic over a little negro boy. He is coal-black, shiny and dressed in a string round his loins whence dangle three corks. You would take him for an antique bronze, so perfect are his feet, wrists and figure.

Mme. B—— wants to buy the negro boy, as her comrade has bought the monkey. Alas! negroes are no longer sold. "What a pity!" The actress is inconsolable. She would have taken him to France and dressed him as Mme. du Barry did Sézamore.

M. Bergeret consoles her :

"My sweet creature, children are like puppies and charming even when they lack distinction. Spare your tears. This child will grow and become a man even as we are. Man, alas! is but the caricature of a child."

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### *THE EIGHTH WONDER*

Decidedly we make one with the theatrical tour. The star of the company is now neither B—— nor G—— but Anatole France. At every stopping-place are the same delegations, the same speeches, the same supers in frock-coats and top-hats. I say supers, for saving the accent, which varies, all politicians have the same faces and utter the same commonplaces. You would say that we carry all these people with us aboard ship, somewhere in the hold, and produce them when the boat stops. Their rôle is that of insulators, to make sterile all contact with the foreign land, and intercept the sun's most luminous rays with their official parasol. In vain have we crossed



the line. They are for ever with us, like an eternal prize-giving day at school.

For a week we have talked of the bay of Rio de Janeiro.

"You know it?"

"No."

"Oh, what a treat for you! It is one of the seven wonders of the world."

"I thought the seven wonders were in the Old World?"

"Then it is the eighth."

And here it is. Everyone greets it with his or her own interjection or epithet. There are those who admire in "Oh!" and those who admire in "Ah!" There are the fascinated, the silent, the ecstatic. There are also the voluble.

The Duenna makes use of a changeless word, whatever she is taken to see, be it church, museum, waterfall, or hospital:

"Charming!"

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### THE DUENNA'S DREAM

The Duenna comes late to lunch to-day, her eyes down-cast and her brow wreathed in care. Yes, she who is never upset by anything, is in anguish at the thought of what may be happening in Paris, this May Day. She refuses the *hors-d'œuvre* with the gesture of a Mater Dolorosa. Revolution rumbles in France, and she has left a beloved brother, and friends, and her cat. Anatole France comforts her:

"May Day, my charmer, is not a revolution, but a demonstration. There is all the difference between them. No demonstration ever led to a revolution. Demonstrations, rather, make revolutions miscarry, as the police know well. Therefore they organize all the demonstrations. Shall

I tell you something? There is no great difference between the Fête-Dieu, that in bygone days was publicly celebrated in every town, and the May Day processions. Then they sang the *Tantum Ergo*; now the *Internationale*. In place of eucharistic banners, you have revolutionary flags. Red rosettes, for flowers. And high priests, as many as you please. Maybe there have been a few scuffles and skirmishes, and some militants have done the frogmarch. But your brother and your friends and your cat are far too circumspect to mingle with the populace to-day. You will find good news of them at Rio. Take some of this macaroni. It has an almost classic accent and a colour worthy of Veronese."

"No, no," sobs the Duenna. "I have had a dream. It was horrible. I saw——"

She cannot tell what she saw, for she faints into the arms of her neighbour, who fondles her like a broken doll. All the company rush to her aid and, with much theatrical effect, unlace her and slap her hands and sprinkle water over her painted cheeks. From carmined lips break forth the words: "Clemenceau the Tiger—Mamma——" A silver thread escapes from her golden wig.

"We must carry her to the cabin, poor child. She is so sensitive! Perhaps she has had a letter?"

"No, no. Just a dream. She dreamed of teeth being torn out. It's one of the worst omens possible."

With a vigour rare in one of sixty years, M. Bergeret carries off the swooning actress.

Had she foreseen that she would faint?

What petticoats! What bows! What flounces! And violet stockings with silver clocks, like those of the Vicomte de Mascarille!

Coffee is being served when M. Bergeret reappears, as jolly as a sandboy.

"She's better, much better. Anxiety—solitude— Who can ever say why a lovely woman is anxious? I have reassured her. She is asleep."

He stirs his coffee with a frisky spoon. Then whispers in my ear:

"The face is a little worn, but the rest——! Ah, youth itself!"

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#### RENAN'S REFERENCES

It has become a fixed rule. At every stopping place, the orator who comes on board to acclaim Anatole France in the name of Literature and Democracy, addresses him as a "disciple of Renan." You should see the curl of M. Bergeret's lip! He takes down the speech as if it were a purge, and after the ceremony murmurs: "Black-guard!" Then the vials of his wrath overflow: "Renan, my friend, was a novelist, not a historian,—a novelist for church committees! He is wholly lacking in critical sense and in insight into the past. You think I exaggerate? On the contrary, I err by my moderation. Remember the familiarity with which he treats his heroes. He writes in his ecclesiastical way: 'The life led by a Chilperic or a Clotaire was not very different from that led in our time by a large farmer of Beauce or Brie!' In his *History of Israel* he compares Saul to a Sheik, David to Abd-el-Kader, and the temple of Jerusalem to Notre Dame de Lorette. He virtually hobnobs, if I may use the word, with Jehovah—you might really think from the way he speaks that he had been playing dominoes at the neighbouring café with the Lord of Creation. 'This capricious God,' he banters, 'is favouritism personified. He battles for his rights to the point of absurdity. He is incensed against people without the least reason. Then

they give him the smoke of a burnt offering to sniff, and he is appeased ! ' Do you call that exactly classic ? I declare it might be by Léo Taxit ! Why, it is like the jesting of a sacristan out for the day !

"Renan's suppleness is much vaunted. The word that should be used is 'inconsistency.' Who shall count the vagaries of the author of *La Vie de Jésus* ? He is a perfect weathercock. In one of the early editions he explains the miracle of Lazarus on physical grounds : ' On the terrace life passes in the midst of a truly Oriental familiarity. The talk is prolonged under the twinkling of the stars. Veils float in the breezes. Now is the dreamy hour of dreams and invention. Talk is of the Master and of his great mission. But mankind must be persuaded of the truth, and the naked truth offends. So they agree on a pious fraud : the pretence of Lazarus' death.' Now read the fourth or fifth edition. Here it is another song. The explanation has become metaphysical : truly supple, isn't it ? ' There is, among all peoples, a legendary personage, who symbolizes the national sufferings and aspirations. With us it was Jacques Bonhomme ; with the Jews it was Lazarus, the lice-infested, downtrodden beggar who holds out his hand at the door of the Temple. But the time predicted by the Prophets would come when the rich should be despoiled and the pauper shivering on the doorstep should take the foremost place in the sanctuary.' And under these ingenious fables, the most imposing references ! Renan describes the Last Supper and the invention of the Eucharist as follows : ' Then Jesus took the bread and stretching out His venerable and holy hands'—Wouldn't you say that the ex-seminarist had partaken their meal with the twelve ? The passage is marked with a reference. Ever thirsty for sources, you rush to the note and read : '*Venerabiles et sanctas*. A very ancient canon of

the mass.' A cannon shot, indeed! Now I will prove to you, by means of a little fable, the inanity of Renan's method. Suppose we have deciphered some papyrus or other and read: 'The Sultan Saladin amused himself one evening at Biskra by throwing dates to Abahah, his favourite slave. The fair maiden caught the sweet fruit in her rosy lips, but by mischance a date stone in its flight wounded the Genie of the Night, who was flying hard by. Irritated, the Genie'—and so on. Here is the commentary of the excellent and supple M. Renan: 'The Sultan Saladin? What could be clearer? There were many sultans of that name. Nothing simpler, either, than the slave Abahah. All Sultans have favourites; all are fond of fair slaves and dates. Now the dates of Biskra were famous above all. They have indeed preserved their fame, as any grocer can tell you. While eating the dates the Sultan Saladin kept throwing them at the mistress of his heart: lovers always tease one another. But he rejected the stones. Nothing more rational. The practice of removing stones from dates goes back to the furthest antiquity. Moreover we are acquainted by numerous communications to the Academy of Medicine, of the danger of attempting to digest a whole date together with its stone. The intestine of the infant, or of the glutton, is blocked. Stoppage ensues, and a surgical operation becomes necessary. These inconveniences were however known before the institution of academies of medicine. We may therefore believe that the Sultan Saladin rejected the stones, when he ate dates. One of the stones, thrown violently away, wounded the Genie of the Night. I appeal to your childish memories (writes the ingenious author of *La Vie de Jésus*). Which of us, in the refectory, has not amused his mischievous fingers by playing with a cherry—or date stone? This proves the youthful spirit of the Sultan. How old was



he when he threw date stones at his favourite slave? He was in love, and love is a rejuvenator. Alas, the projectile did not damage the usher's nose, as in our own youthful age, but wounded the Genie of the Night! Dread catastrophe! The Genie of the Night? But this must be understood in a purely metaphorical sense.' "

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### THE OVERSCRUPULOUS PUBLISHER

P——, the publisher, has asked him for a preface to an édition de luxe of the *Ode to a Grecian Urn*, a poem by John Keats, and he has agreed to do it. Madame, who knows English like Shakespeare, will supply the materials. But P—— once gone, France's ill humour overflows.

"He is devoted to me like a dog. But you can't make a publisher out of a Newfoundland, let alone a poodle. He's built me a chapel, in the Boulevard Saint Germain, by the side of St. Germain l'Auxerrois. Have you seen the shop? It has a triangular portico, like the Punch and Judy show in the Champs Élysées. Alas, Punch takes the place of Pallas Athene. In the window are photographs of me, and no books but mine are sold. A perilous honour, to be sure! Inside the chapel P—— officiates gloomily. On a mantelpiece of Prussian appearance is a plaster Victory of Samothrace, and on the walls Panathenaic casts. And everywhere my face, my face, my face! P—— is rushing painfully towards shipwreck. I obtain for him, from Calmann Lévy, who is by no means easy to deal with, the right to reprint an édition de luxe of one or other of my books. Anyone else would earn a handsome profit out of it: P——, because he wants to do the thing too well, earns nothing but white hair, wrinkles, and insomnia. Conscientious folk are always

unhappy. For instance, in order to print *Le Procureur de Judée*, he chose a type dating from Louis XV that exists nowhere outside the *Imprimerie Nationale*. To get permission to use it, he had to chase round all the ministries. Happily, Barthou was there! The attraction of an unique specimen, you see. And everything was in unison. The paper must be specially manufactured, as in the times of Panckoucke. Merely for the water mark, two or three months were required. The ink, too. For *Le Procureur de Judée* P—— had the brilliant idea to print all the phrases about the sea and the sky in azure, everything that suggested Golgotha in scarlet, and the veil of Mary Magdalene in saffron! I had him up here every morning from nine to twelve, over her veil: he couldn't find the exact shade of the ink. You know what an excellent man he is; but how melancholy, how scrupulous! Worse, he is a positivist. He has as much cheek as Rochefort, and resembles nothing more than a gloomy clown, dancing among the tombs. What splendid chances he has lost! He has a *Booklover's Almanac*, the sort of thing that sells very well. Booklovers have always been keen on almanacs, and they are not to be disdained, for the most brilliant victories over superstition have been far oftener won by almanacs than by staid folios. You know the jingle: 'Many a time has the fair of Frankfort upset the decrees of the *Collège de France*.'

"Rabelais was a maker of almanacs. What else is *Pantagruel* but almanac literature? Well, P—— has touched up his *Booklover's Almanac* so long, that he is now only four or five years late with it. The almanac for 1905 will appear this year. Of course a booklover's almanac is not like Mathew Lansberg's, the learned don't buy it to know the phases of the moon.

"Who can have put it in P——'s head to publish

this cup or urn? And why must he offer me this cup of bitterness? It appears that Keats was wholly Greek and P—— is greatly smitten with my Greek. Well he may be, for he doesn't know a word of the language! But why, instead of crossing the Channel and fishing out this exquisite specimen of Greek poetry, could he not republish some honest Frenchman fallen into oblivion? I suggested to him an edition of forgotten or unappreciated authors. He answered, 'They already exist.' What a reason! As if all progress did not consist in doing the same thing over and over again! Of course you must not always stick to La Fontaine's Fables, *Manon Lescaut*; *La Religieuse*, *Les Bijoux Indiscrets*—masterpieces, by the way, that are not precisely unappreciated. But take for example Gozlan. Ask a bookseller for *Aristide Froissart*, *Les Nuits du Père Lachaise*, or *Les Emotions de Polydore Marasquin*: you will be taken for a lunatic."

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#### LÉON GOZLAN

"Léon Gozlan was a charming writer, full of fantasy and bubbling spirit. Like Méry—another forgotten author—he was from Marseilles, and they both make the impression on me of fireworks in a dish of bouillabaisse. No doubt a good many of their squibs are a bit damp nowadays, but one could still lift a number of titbits from them. Balzac, our great Balzac, greatly appreciated Gozlan's wit and envied him his gift for punning. You know the parody of Boileau's line: 'The Frenchman, born mischievous, invented the guillotine'? It is Gozlan's. What a motto for the history of the French Revolution! You have never read *Aristide Froissart*, wretched youngster? I have a good

mind to say to you, like my professor of philosophy, at Stanislas: 'You have never read *Le Discours sur la Méthode*? How I envy you, young man!' There is, for instance, a scene of the ennoblement of Aristide's father, that reminds you of Molière, or, more properly speaking, of Augier."

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## HENRI IV'S LETTER

"Froissart, the father, is a former Jacobin, now repentant, and as president of a revolutionary tribunal had chopped off a good few heads, besides having a finger in the pie of the *Biens Nationaux*. At the Restoration he turned his revolutionary smock inside out and became a defender of throne and altar. But there were mortifications in store for him—administered by his son. This sweet young rascal, to get money out of his father, announced with a great boom: *Les Mémoires du sieur Froissart*, edited by his son. He didn't have to go far! When the father read the proofs of the first two chapters, he paid, and bought silence. Chapter I began: 'The first aristocrat I had guillotined——' and Chapter II 'The first *bien national* which I bought for a handful of worthless paper money——'.

"Like many other repentant Jacobins, old Froissart was bitten with a frantic desire to be noble. So he betook himself to a heraldic agency, managed—a fact unknown to him—by his rascal son.

"'Sir,' said old Froissart, 'I have good reasons to believe that I come of a noble house.'

"'I am convinced of it,' replied young Froissart, in a disguised voice, recognizing his father, but unrecognized by him owing to a false beard and patriarchal wig.

“ ‘The difficulty is to know since when I am a nobleman.’

“ ‘Like other illustrious personages, your past is lost in impenetrable obscurity.’

“ ‘Help me, sir, to rise from this obscurity. I wish to be noble, so that I may marry a lady of rank and of suitable age, and disinherit a son of mine, a man without morals or respect. In short, I want to have a name, patent and arms.’

“ ‘You want a lot.’

“ ‘I know.’

“ ‘What is your name?’

“ ‘Jean Cascaret Froissart.’

“ ‘Your names are impossible. You must renounce two of them. You will keep the name of Cascaret. From what part of the country are you?’

“ ‘Grenoble.’

“ ‘Well, my dear Monsieur Cascaret, you are of Breton origin. Formerly your name was Kaskarouet, but in settling in the Dauphiné you lost two K’s.’

“ ‘Pity!’

“ ‘Henceforth you will call yourself Kaskarouet de Kaskarouet. You are noble, very noble, infinitely noble—on a level with the Kerkabons, the Kerkaramecs, and the Kerkangaroos.’

“ ‘You don’t say so?’

“ ‘And what title does M. Kaskarouet de Kaskarouet fancy? Marquis? A bit heavy—attracts too much attention. Baron? Suggests a Napoleonic origin. Chevalier? Now, Chevalier—ah, that’s elegant. It has a scent and a smack to it. Listen: “M. le Chevalier de Kaskarouet de Kaskarouet”—sounds well! and how well it will look on a letter! Just think of the honour when you depart this life: “Another ancient name extinguished. Yesterday passed away, in the arms of



religion, the Chevalier de Kaskarouet de Kaskarouet "—you'll burst with pride in the coffin!"

" "Good for Kaskarouet de Kaskarouet, but where is my patent?"

" "How far do you want to go back?"

" "To St. Louis."

" "Don't want anything, do you? No, no, St. Louis comes too dear, take Henri IV and be satisfied."

"Parchments were brought, and 'Heat the wax!' cried the herald to a clerk. 'Seal it with the great seal! Five hundred francs, please.'

" "Right."

"While father puts up his patent, and son counts his money, the latter remarks to the newborn Chevalier:

" "You wouldn't care, for a hundred francs extra, to have a letter from Henri IV to your ancestor?"

" "A hundred francs for a letter seems rather stiff."

" "Ah, but this will be something like a letter. The Vert Galant wrote it after the battle of Dreux."

" "Let's see."

" "Listen: "To my brave Kaskarouet de Kaskarouet.

" " "I knew you brave, but I knew you not braver than I. It is at Paris that I would take you in my arms.

" " "Your King

" " "HENRI." "

"What do you say to that letter? There never was anything more typical Henri IV than these lines written with Gozlan's white cockade at Marseilles. It's short, it's gay, fresh, the scent of the morn hangs about it, and you'd think it written with one foot in the stirrup. In the cordiality of its ellipsis it rivals the famous note: 'My Faucheur, put wings to your best steed and bid Montespan ride his to death. Why? You shall know

from me at Nérac. Haste! Speed! Come! Fly! 'Tis the order of your master, and the prayer of your friend.'

"And the note to Gabrielle: 'I write to you, dear love, from the feet of your portrait.'

"Truth to tell, the Vert Galant was far less gallant towards poor Margot, grown old and repudiated, but not less passionate. She had lost all her hair and wore a wig. Not that that made much difference. It was the fashion then for ladies to distribute locks of hair to their lovers. So Margot—for a queen, even fallen, always finds lovers—to reward hers, had her pages regularly cropped, and it was their blond hair that was worn in lockets on aching hearts. Henri IV didn't take his fate in very good part. Somewhere or other he calls Queen Marguerite 'the camel lady.' Truly modern! She wrote to him for free passage for five hundred butts of wine without paying toll.

"'What a request!' he grumbled. 'Is that not to write herself drunkard on parchment? For fear lest she should fall from the back of one of her beasts, I refused it.'"

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#### THE FORGERY FACTORY

"Gozlan's letter is the masterpiece of Henri IV's correspondence. It's false, you say? Well, and what about the others? In ancient France there were regular factories of forgeries. Learned, starveling clerks, nibbling eternally at parchments, forged fair royal letters for archives by the dozen; and most expert at it they were. In my *Jeanne d'Arc* I took seriously the account of the marvels of the coronation and of the Maid's tittupings by three gentlemen of Anjou who described them

to their very honoured lady mother. My book having appeared, I could not change my attitude ; but between ourselves this fine fifteenth-century letter has a very strong resemblance to the Restoration and the Duchesse de Berri—the Gothic troubadour in fact, in all his non-sensical splendour ! Yes, these three gentlemen of Anjou were surely related to the false Clothilde de Surville.

“ Nor did the factory of historical forgeries go out of business during the French Revolution. I am sure you have read with a tender sigh the letter written by Marie Antoinette, on the eve of her death, to Madame Elizabeth. Such a touching letter and overflowing with such anxiety for her children and her friends ! It is a forgery. It was fabricated in some royalist laboratory under the Restoration. Come now ; let’s keep our heads and dry our eyes. Where was the letter found, and when ? Twenty years after the queen’s execution among the papers of Courtois, who is supposed to have found it on the 9th Thermidor among those of Robespierre. There’s a fine jumble ! Well, admit that it was so, and that the queen’s letter was delivered to Robespierre, and not to Madame Elizabeth. But we have a voluminous correspondence of Marie Antoinette. She was by no means strong in orthography. Her correspondence with her mother Maria Theresa and with her sister the Queen of Naples is studded with Germanisms. None of these Teutonic expressions is found in the last letter written in the Conciergerie, the style and orthography of which are correct. Now there are some who say : ‘ It is the hand of Providence. On the threshold of the grave the unfortunate sovereign was struck by light, like St. Paul, and received in her dungeon the gift of tongues, or at least that of spelling.’ What balderdash ! We know that the poor woman was almost dead of cold and fear, that night. Lest she

should take poison or otherwise commit suicide a sentinel has been put in her room, almost indeed in her bed. The soldier, who heard her shivering behind a screen, has left a simple-hearted account of his historic watch. Perhaps even this is forgery—who knows? The queen, he relates, was perishing of cold. He advised her to put her solitary chair on her feet, so as to bring back a little warmth into them. Part of that supreme night she passed mending her poor clothes. She sewed a ribbon of black on to her cap. Like all the folk of the Ancien Régime she was a stickler for ceremony, and the scaffold being a public ceremony, how could she appear otherwise than in widow's weeds, since her husband had been guillotined? But the witness, to the best of my belief, does not say that he saw her write. The text of the letter, too, is disturbing. The allusion it contains to that atrocious calumny, the Dauphin's horrible deposition, gives additional reason to suspect it: it is too skilful and therefore unnatural. No, we must put that touching letter in the same box with the words of Egdevord de Firmond: 'Son of St. Louis, rise to Heaven!' Perhaps he said them, but if so, it was under the Restoration, when he didn't risk losing his head. And who actually was this Egdevord? He was a foreigner, sprung from no one knows where. He had not sworn assent to the Civil Constitution of the clergy. Yet this non-juror is allowed to say mass in the tower of the Temple and to assist the Tyrant on the scaffold! If you ask me, he probably belonged to the police."

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*"LA FIENTE DE L'ESPRIT"*

"It was from Gozlan that Balzac borrowed the play upon words with which he bespangled his dialogue.

Victor Hugo too liked to pun, and so did the great Napoleon, and so did my father, who was not a great man. One day a certain M. Cochon was recommended to the emperor for his administrative capacity.

“ ‘I appoint you prefect of Bayonne, the land of ham,’ said he to Cochon.

“ The same with Marshal Victor, who was nicknamed Beausoleil by his comrades : ‘ Beausoleil, I make you Duc de Bellelune.’ ”

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### HOSPITALITY

From out the heap of correspondence found on the ship putting in, he preserves the letter from a judge in Buenos Ayres, an examining magistrate, related to the president of the republic, who puts his house in that city at the disposal of the Lecturer. The judge is a bachelor and his mother, with whom he lives, is at the moment in Europe. He professes the keenest admiration for Anatole France. If the most famous of contemporary authors will deign to repose under his roof throughout the whole of his stay in the Argentine capital, he will be proud and grateful, and be honoured for all his life. He is a collector, and the house is full of antique furniture, curious books, and engravings, in the midst of which works of art and select authors the Master will feel thoroughly at home. No answer shall mean that the offer is accepted. P.S. : the judge's servants—to wit, valet, cook, coachman and maid—perfectly trained and devoted as they are, will also be at the Master's disposal.

Anatole France reads the letter with visible content.

“ To be frank, my friend, I had no idea where we should lodge over there. Such practical details as hotels, reserving rooms, paying bills, working out trains, are the



death of me. Figures and change give me brain fever. Mine is no mathematical mind. For all that box of tricks Madame is my right hand—indeed, outside Paris, my guardian angel. Now I have left my guardian angel in France. It was an angel who guarded me a bit too much and was for ever shortening my tether. I could no longer browse at all. Who can doubt the hand of Providence? For now I sail to the New World. You and I and the priest of Meudon undertake a pastoral tour and go to preach Pantagruelism to the South Americans. Where shall we lodge? Much care I! ‘God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb.’ Confess: you were feeling somewhat uneasy! I felt it. You were wondering: ‘Where shall we eat? Where shall we sleep after preaching Rabelais?’ Man of little faith! On land, at sea, we are in the hand of God, like the tiny fly or the ant in the gardener’s hand. If we are disquiet or stir about a fillip sends us into eternity. But if we abandon ourselves to the blessed will of Him who turns the spit of the universe—why then! While we, like the subtle Ulysses, were crossing the bitter floods, an honest man the other side of the sea was arranging his house for our benefit.”

\* \* \* \* \*

#### *THE TWO ROADS*

He sighs: “Ah, if I were but fifty years old!”

“Why, what would you do if you were but fifty? Would you change your path?”

“Ah, yes indeed, I would send literature to the dickens! I was born among books and I have made books—but books are not the only things in the world. If I were only fifty, my friend, I should not go back to France.”

He turns to the Duenna :

"Is it not upon this unknown soil that I have discovered happiness? Yes, I should stay here, and I should make a fortune. I should act plays, I should paint pictures. My hand and eye are good. Between ourselves, I was more gifted for the brush than for the pen. But a man never does what he wants, or, more truly, he does not know what he wants.

"Why should I go back to the old world at my age? Not many days are left to me. I should use them to visit unknown lands. There are two reasonable ways to employ your life. Either you stick in a corner, in your native land, and await death, making friends the while with all sorts of local and patriotic follies, imagining the vast world from your arm-chair and your little garden and decreeing that everything the other side of the hedge is barbarian. Or else one goes forward and never passes again by the same road, fingering towns and countries like books, looking through them, casting them aside, never sleeping two days running in the same bed with the same woman. There are so many women! And so many beds!"

The Duenna shows signs of getting cross.

"Did I say, my dearest, that this was my programme?"

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#### CLASSIC AND ROMANTIC

A discussion at table on plays classic and romantic. Everyone gives his opinion and definition. France asks :

"Who is the principal personage in Racine's *Iphigénie*? Iphigénie? Agamemnon? No. It's the wind. If the wind blows and fills the sails—then, hey for Great Troy! If it falls, the king's daughter will be

killed. Now Racine hardly makes anything of this wind : in which he is absolutely classical. If it were Hugo, we should have a tempest with water spouts and cyclones. Imagine *Iphigénie* treated by a modern producer like Antoine or Gémier. We should see the harbour and nothing but the harbour. There would be all the ships of the fleet lying on lifeless waves, and dawns, and sunsets, and tar, and the salty ebb and flow. Do you see the difference ? The classics dispense with stage production. The romantics must have their scene painters and carpenters ; and if the stagehands go on strike, there's no play. Whereas you can share the anguish of Racine's *Iphigénie* in your bed."

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#### DISAPPOINTMENT

The sculptor nephew relates the genius of his Faun to a stout, red-faced German, whose bust, doubtless, he hopes to do. The other listens with marked boredom. At the end he shakes the nephew vigorously by the hand : " Ah, my dear fellow artist, how happy I am to meet——"

" Fellow artist ! Aren't you a man of business ? "

" I, a man of business ! No, indeed, I am a sculptor like you ! "

It is his turn now to shove a photograph under the Frenchman's nose.

" It's a bust of the Kaiser. The emperor graciously accorded me two sittings before I suited. He said to me : ' Americans are a bit vain. When they know that you have done my bust, they will think you are a genius. You won't be able to cope with all the orders you receive. ' "

All abashed, the sculptor nephew puts back his Faun

and looks with respect at the colleague who counts crowned heads among his patrons.

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### THE SEA AND THE WRITING DESK

Seated at his washhandstand, turned into a desk, he snips and gums and blue pencils, preparing his lectures on Rabelais. The Duenna drags him out of the midst of his papers by the cord of his dressing gown on to the deck: "You must come—there is a miraculous sunset."

He grumbles:

"It is the viscount, confound him, who invented sunsets at sea. Until Chateaubriand no one had ever hit on this easy and everlasting bit of bravura. There were dawns, and sunrises in the mountains, according to the gospel of Jean Jacques. Flaming dawn clearly revealed the immortality of the soul. But no one spied anything immortal in the dusk. What a genius for gabble the begetter of *Atala* had!

"You learned the speech at school, I'm sure, as I did. There's no good mother's son who hasn't mumbled its lines. Does it still figure in anthologies for the young? The original is in the *Itinéraire*, I think; but the vicomte gave more than one encore of it."

As he strides the deck, the Duenna on his arm, disdaining the wonderful rose of the sea, he whines:

"The heavenly body descends slowly amid the waves and plunges beneath the horizon. Dusk replaces it for half an hour."

"Ah, that half-hour! We'll make the most of it! Out with the epithet box and the coloured chalks, and scatter them well over page and horizon. 'The heaven is white over the setting sun, pale at the zenith, and pearl-grey in the east, and the stars pierce the variegated

hanging with their silvery points.' Let us not forget the vapours of the sea, which are intermingled with those of the sky. Through the transparency of the shadows the viscount's piercing and mythological gaze perceives the nymphs who embrace Telemachus' bark. Nausicaa plays with her companions. Andromache whimpers on the banks of Simois. And what not more besides ? "

He is in great form, and paces the deck like an officer, twisting the points of his beard, without noticing how evening renews the miracle of Proteus in gold and blood and mother-o'-pearl. Aloft, whole landscapes form and disappear, their forms stretching and changing delicately, while the first stars tremble like jewels on the waves. It is word for word, line for line, and touch for touch, Chateaubriand's lyrical, realistic description. The immortal passage is caught by the evening breeze from those cynical lips, like rose petals torn and chewed. He alone remains impervious to the sweetness of sky, sea, and night. His ears are too full of quotations, and he walks under a dusty halo of venerable books. He seems to wear over his eyes a visor made of celebrated pages and precious engravings.

I venture to object :

" People had painted sunsets at sea before Chateaubriand's time. Claude Lorrain, for instance."

" Claude Lorrain ! " he breaks out, " Claude Lorrain has the truth behind him, my friend. He painted from nature. He never put his dusks in mid-ocean where he had not been, but on some rich and familiar bank. Nothing could be more definite than his vapoury pictures. You can name the towns and palaces in them ; recognize the personages and processions. All's not up in the air with him. He doesn't waste his colours in fireworks. Our Lorrain is a great artist. Our viscount



is a great humbug. You think I exaggerate? Ask men of science. They, who can agree on nothing, all agree that, to produce a fine sunset, an atmosphere made of dust and of smoke is a necessity. It is our terrestrial breath that the declining sun colours with its oblique rays; but honestly here in mid-ocean, far from any shore, will you find smoke and dust? Be sincere, look at it with everyday eyes, forgetting your learning and Chateaubriand's eloquence. Admit that you have never seen a simpler, duller, more middle-class sunset. And if there is a goddess about, she is on the ship."

With eyes blind to it, he points to the burning sea. His dressing gown flames like a cardinal's scarlet robe.

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#### *IN THE ROADS OF RIO*

A contrary wind impedes our progress. One of the screws has gone wrong. The ship pants along in a foamy sea. We should arrive at Rio for lunch, but night has fallen when we sight the lights of the shore. Impossible to land. It is too late for the formalities of Customs and health inspection. We must put off our visit to the capital of Brazil till to-morrow. Anatole France, purring at the Duenna's feet, takes the annoyance calmly. His own affairs are making good progress.

"I ought to have lunched with the President of the Republic and the Ministers. All the Excellencies, fair charmer, are not worth one nymph, one goddess. Let us thank Neptune for his foul wind."

This note of gallantry grows crescendo from dish to dish throughout the meal, reaching its apogee with the cheese and the dessert. He eats like a wolf.

"Since I have known you, my soul, I believe in Providence."

Suddenly a burst of squibs and the noise of serenades rises from the sea, now grown calm. A crown of brilliantly lit boats surrounds the sombre mass of the *Amazon*. Brasses blare. Bengal fires turn waves, night, and passengers from red to blue and to green. And a clamour, as at a public meeting, comes from the boats:

“Long live Anatolio! Long live Anatolio! Long live Anatolio!”

At the first sound Anatole France has fled to his cabin, abandoning the *Duenna* in ecstasy on deck. He undresses frantically.

“Master, there is a delegation of Brazilians, I don’t exactly know who, come to fetch you to preside at a banquet.”

“I am dying, my child!”

He kicks his slippers across the cabin and slips into his berth, dragging the bedclothes over him like a shroud. Only his cardinal-red skull cap is visible, whence issues a groan:

“I am at death’s door, my child, at death’s door. It has taken me all of a sudden. The sea has tired me. It’s my liver—my head. I shall never live out the voyage.”

“Your admirers have brought these wreaths and palms.”

I lay the tinsel trophy on the rug.

“Let me die in peace! Express my regrets to these excellent people. Describe my condition to them. They are not barbarians. Beg them to extinguish their lights and still their brass and let me sleep. A good night will work wonders for me. I suffer like a man on the wheel! Go, my child, be eloquent. To-morrow morning at any time they like. But to-night I am within an inch of death.”

The enthusiasts, somewhat abashed, have departed on their luminous boats. Nothing troubles more the serenity of the sea.

A quarter of an hour later, Anatole France is on deck, as frisky as can be, his arms full of wreaths and palms that he offers to the Duenna :

"Ah ! crowns belong by right to you, my sovereign."

She weighs the coppery bouquets and silk ribbons and fringes with careful precision born of long experience of such homage in the theatre ; then concludes :

"Your admirers haven't ruined themselves for you ! All that's not very heavy."

However, she undoes the ribbons :

"Still, it may serve where it's not been printed on."

The morrow, she decks her wig with them.

Together with the officers of health and the Customs, the official delegations scramble on to the deck. Never have we seen such gilded uniforms. There is more gold braid than seams. And swords, and plumes, and metal buttons as large as shields. And medals.

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#### PRESENTATIONS

"Admiral de Zuniga."

France, with martial voice and bristling moustaches—Cambronne at Waterloo, he might be :

"Admiral, you are a hero !"

The sea-dog bows and marches off as if to command a boarding party. M. Bergeret whispers in my ear :

"An admiral is *ex officio* a hero. A general too."

The presentations continue.

"Our national novelist : Angelo Colombo."

Frenzy of delight. Embrace.

" Ah ! At last I hold in my arms the Balzac of Brazil ! "

" The artist Michaelo, who painted the celebrated frescoes. "

" I grasp with joy the hand of the Apelles of the New World. "

" Professor Germano, our philosopher. "

" You cannot be astonished, illustrious Master, that we come to seek lessons of wisdom at your feet ! "

" The poet Casanegra. "

" I have had some of your verses translated to me, and thought I was listening to Homer, Virgil, and Victor Hugo ! "

" The musician, Bondolfo. "

" You have renewed the miracles of Orpheus. "

These illustrious craniums seem in no way disconcerted by such massive comparisons and schoolboy epithets, but receive without flinching the crowns flung at them as one flings curtain-rings at the neck of champagne bottles at country fairs. They positively prance with joy. They would go to death for the Master. The presentations are numerous. Nobody is forgotten.

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#### ROUND THE TOWN

Reception at the Academy of Rio. Speech from its president, Ruis Basboro. He buries Anatole France under wreaths of praise. But among the laurels and the roses he strews some thistles. He lauds the purity of the style. He blames the impurity of the stuff. The speech smacks of the sermon.

The room is as commonplace as a schoolroom. Through the windows pours in light too brilliant for our western eyes and the brawling of a neighbouring fowl-run full of ducks.

France replies, and this time does not read but improvises for fifteen abundant minutes. Everyone is lauded. Everyone gets his epithet. Then he comes to Brazil itself.

"O Brazilians, be proud of your youth, as we are proud of our age!" He predicts an incomparable future for Brazil. "It is here that Pallas Athene has taken refuge."

We visit the library. It is rich and has a Gutenberg Bible. But European books suffer here from the intense heat. Swarms of insects devour them, dig trenches in the bindings and weave lace-like patterns in the margins and round the text. They fancy the white and despise the black.

"They must be critics," remarks Anatole France.

Don Pedro's own library is here, too, at the end of the room. The Master is shown Renan's *Marcus Aurelius* with an autograph dedication to the Emperor: "To the Marcus Aurelius of Brazil. Ernest Renan."

"The ex-seminarist," he chuckles, "excelled at genuflexions."

We are taken to the theatre along a brand-new boulevard. The theatre is built in Munich style with a cupola surmounted by a colossal eagle. The Germans rule the roost here.

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#### LUNCH WITH THE PRESIDENT

Luncheon at the presidential, formerly the imperial, palace. It is a suite of unpretentious rooms, recalling a sub-prefecture, with furniture of Louis Philippe and Napoleon III epochs, and Voltaire arm-chairs, all plush and padding. On the walls are commonplace political portraits, but suddenly among them a well-painted harmonious seascape.



"By whom is that?"

"Ah, by Don Pedro, the ex-Emperor!"

They are never tired of talking about their Don Pedro. He was so cultivated, so humane. He wore his crown so gracefully. He painted like a professional. He was a regular Providence to artists and men of letters.

"Then why the dickens did you turn him off his throne?" asks France of the panegyrist.

The luncheon is served in a gallery all windows that recalls the buffet at certain French stations. Around the table the whole Cabinet is collected. It is a political meal, with French cookery and French wines, and masses of unknown flowers of heady sweetness, and the awkwardness of a table d'hôte where you have to find out who your neighbour is. Mine is an Excellency. The Master has to submit to reproaches for having offered his first fruits to the Argentine. As well throw his pearls before swine. People there are mere savages. What should they understand of Rabelais? It is at Rio that Anatole France should have begun instead of ending.

Then another point is taken. Why Rabelais? A fine subject truly, but academic. Rabelais is not popular, although French books abound here. Doubtless he will become so after Anatole France's brilliant lectures. But would it not have been better to choose a subject less archæological? Even French people need a dictionary and commentaries to understand Pantagruel and Gargantua. Ah, if only the Master would discourse to them on the greatest man of the nineteenth century!

"Who is that? Napoleon? Victor Hugo?"

"Oh, no! Auguste Comte!"

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*THE FLAG OF PANURGE*

A letter from "A Group of Militant Socialists": The Comrades of Buenos Ayres implore Comrade Anatole France to refuse the hospitality of the examining magistrate. He is a bourgeois and a cruel enemy of the people. On May Day terrible street fights ensanguined the Festival of Labour. The police attempted to break up the procession, failing which the slavedrivers used their arms and fired on the people. There were wounded and dead, among them women and children, and the demonstrators were arrested in shoals. Will Comrade Anatole France clasp the bloody hand of the Judge who was the accomplice of this ambush and keeps the flower of the Party in prison? It would be a scandalous piece of treachery! But they trust that the rumours circulated by the reactionary press concerning France's stay with the Judge are false. They are infamous stories set afloat by the police, the priests, the capitalists, all enemies of the people and of Anatole France. Such rumours should be authoritatively contradicted without delay. For this they put the paper of the Party at the Master's disposal.

The letter does not produce much effect.

"What business is it of these fellows? I have come here in the cause of literature, not politics. There were riots in Buenos Ayres on Monday, forsooth. So there were, I wager, in Paris, Berlin, Rome, Pekin, and all the great cities of the New and the Old World. Why should I be enlisted in the movement here? Let us not depart from our programme. Our programme is Rabelais: twelve lectures on Rabelais—those are my battles. I range myself under the banner of Panurge. You know the *Credo* of the priest of Meudon: 'Always speak well of the Grand Prior, place yourself by his side at table,

and let the world go as it lists.' On my travels I am for the stationmaster and the gendarmes.

"True, I am at heart with the proletariat. I have announced my opinions often enough and loud enough in France to be allowed to travel in peace. And it's not for them to give me lessons. How do we know that our excellent Judge is not atrociously slandered? The other day, it was his morals that were attacked. As if I were in any peril from him at my age! Everyone must find salvation as he can. Had I gone to lecture at Rome or Athens, these hypocrites would have stopped my consorting with Socrates, Pluto, Alcibiades, Virgil, Horace, and Catullus. Thank you for nothing! I care naught for persons of virtue: they are too boring. Give me men of wit.

"Now they are in arms against our host's honour. Their clamour only inclines me to sympathize with him. Had it been some Danton, now, he would be less calumniated. Stones are only thrown at trees laden with fruit. We will stay with the Judge, and let the comrades of Buenos Ayres burst with their own bile. Their letter is impertinent. They seem to throw doubt on my affection for the people. I shall not reply. I shall never have received the letter. It shall have been lost in the post. All the imbeciles in the world appear to want me to lose my time! It's your fault. Why the deuce must you be rummaging in that nonsense and welcoming the letter basket at each stop, as though it were brimming with fruit? Into the salt sea with it all. And how do you know that the letter of the so-called militant socialists of Buenos Ayres is not a trap laid by the police? It's a patent imposture, a pit dug for me, to prevent my lecturing! If I reply, my letter will be an apple of discord. But I shan't reply. I shall be dumb, as dumb as a carp. I have received

nothing. I know nothing. I am of no party—save the banner of *Panurge*, and long live the Grand Prior.”

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## MONTEVIDEO

A short stop: so short that we do not land. But people come from shore to see us. Anatole France is interviewed and photographed on deck by the side of the inseparable Duenna, surrounded by the rest of the actors. He whines out his little universal speech through his nose. For long he has felt a vehement sympathy with the people of Montevideo. The glories of their history are known to him. How deep his regret that he cannot stop among them! But on the return voyage he will visit their town, this opulent port whose incomparable panorama he admires from the ship, that is, as it were, the gateway of the Argentine—

“The Argentine?”

Stupefaction of the journalists. We shall have to plough the seas for a day and a night and sail up the Rio de la Plata to reach the Argentine, the neighbour and, by the way, hereditary and irreconcilable enemy of Uruguay, of which Montevideo is the capital.

Reporters and photographers once vanished, the Master remains on deck, following with interest the arabesques of the seagulls. Some watch the stern of the ship and catch on the wing or on the waves the debris of the galley, while others, poised aloft in the blue far above the trap, unexpectedly dive and ravish their booty from the industrious fishers.

“Those who work,” remarks M. Bergeret, “are the Christians. The others must be Jews.”

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## THE COLLECTOR

Accompanied by the Judge, we go the round of the house. It is in a pretentious rococo style. The rooms are pompous and lack intimacy: everything has been sacrificed to make a fine show. Hall there is none. From the street, after a few steps, you enter straight into an interminable *salon*. Overblown pillars, columns of imitation marble, imitation Gobelins tapestries pretentiously draped: it is indeed a hall, but disguised as a picture gallery—the reconstruction of a scene of one of those seventeenth-century pictures of prelates in massive wigs. Only, alas! the windows have been forgotten, and the sun filters through an acidulous skylight of frosted glass.

Anatole France lets his bespectacled glance, for all the world like a curio dealer, wander over the furniture and bric-à-brac, and tries to make out the blackened, daubed pictures.

“That, a Mignard? No, no. It’s a copy—a poor copy too. The original is in the Louvre.”

Near the chimney he discovers a marble medallion, hung in a place of honour, with an inscription underneath the antique profile. He sniffs the image over, and mumbles a few words from the inscription. But, as it is in Spanish, our host comes to his aid and translates it: *Portrait of Pliny the elder, discovered in the ashes of a house at Pompeii and dug up in our presence May 8, 1878*. Then he waits in expectation of praise for so rare a fragment. France, who has almost forgotten where he is, asks in Olympian tones:

“Who wrote that nonsense?”

“My father,” confesses the Judge contritely.

“Ah, indeed! So they worked that dodge on him? Those blackguardly Italians excel at it, and your worthy



father was in good company—the company of popes and princes and millionaires. When a great one of this world visits Herculaneum or Pompeii, they never fail to dig up the rarest antiques under his most gracious or most serene nose. Olympus and the Capitol may be disinterred for you in a trice. Alas, the fact is that they find what has been buried on the eve: the pit has been garnished in honour of the illustrious visitor. For your father the farce was played with discretion. They kept to Pliny the elder who, as we know, belonged to the parish. The forgers mistrusted the sagacity of the author of your days, who was, I am convinced—one need but look at you—a man of exquisite taste and rare merit. Perhaps, too, they had doubts of his pecuniary enthusiasm. How often have I not seen that so-called medallion of Pliny, certificate of authenticity and all! Sometimes it is a Seneca.”

The apocryphal medallion is rescued with difficulty from the author’s iconoclastic hands, which seemingly wish to grind it to powder. Now our host pushes him towards a white marble mantelpiece of effulgent inebriety that pushes out astonishing chicory branches like a petrified sea-anemone.

“It is by your great Pigalle,” murmurs the collector in an ill-assured voice. He is still feeling the downfall of his Mignard and his Pliny.

The pitiless spectacles examine the sides of this extravagance. Then the oracle speaks, sharp as a pebble rattling on glass:

“With a certain amount of benevolent imagination this may be said to resemble the plinths of those gigantic oyster shells offered by I forget whom to the church of St. Sulpice. The plinths are the work of Pigalle, and he gave free rein to his imagination in them. Underneath the pious conch in which Venus could easily lie hid, he

chiselled, as here, crabs and madrepores and starfish. They would really be better in a museum than in a church.

"Your chimney surpasses by far the oddness of the holy-water vessels of St. Sulpice. Does it belong to the eighteenth century? I wonder. In any case, it is of Italian workmanship and a commercial article of extremely debased taste."

Trembling for the rest of his collection, the Judge impels his too critical guest towards the library. He feels justified in drawing the attention of the Master to the doors that are historic and come from a Spanish town, the name of which, together with that of patron saint of the church, he gives.

"There are twelve panels, each of which bears, in relief, an apostle with his attributes. Below are the bishop's arms and those of the King of Spain with the name of the sculptor and the date." His lamented father paid some twenty thousand francs for it in the course of a voyage to Castile. Connoisseurs would offer twice that to-day; but of course he would not sell. Such masterpieces are not to be found every day.

While he chants their praises, Anatole France lets his priestlike hand wander over the apostles. He taps the wood, scratches it, detaches a splinter, then almost plunges it into the eye of the distressed Judge.

"It is soft wood, stained with walnut juice. Poplar, probably. In the good epoch, the doors of churches of note were made of oak or of walnut wood."

Happily grace is found in the books that embellish the whole room with their brilliant bindings and gold tooling. Now we are on our own ground, for here are choice editions of our classic authors: Molière, Voltaire, Paul Louis Courier, Sainte-Beuve, Renan, France among them. Our host remarks:

"The author of the *Life of Jesus* is side by side with the author of the *Life of Joan of Arc*. And most justly. A family party, one might say."

He takes the fancy in bad part.

"Renan and I are as much alike as a pumpkin is like a melon. Poor Renan was devoid of historic and political ballast. He remained a seminarist all his life. By dint of having handled holy oils and vases in childhood, his fingers kept a touch of ecclesiastic oiliness down to his death. Everything he touches he makes soft and tasteless. He is always fabricating secular objects of devotion. His *Life of Jesus*? A fine subject, truly. The finest of all together with *Joan of Arc*. Renan spoiled it, and the proof is the success of his book. Had he written with a really critical pen, he would have offended all the common run of men, who have swarmed on to his *Jesus* like flies on a honey-pot. The cunning sacristan got off by his insipidity and the descriptions. He dished up a mixture of dirty German erudition with seminarist pietism. Sauerkraut and whipped eggs!"

France compares Renan and Sainte-Beuve. The latter tips the scales easily.

"Sainte-Beuve knows everything, understands everything, traces everything to its origin. He is our universal schoolman—the St. Thomas of the nineteenth century. Renan returned to the sheepfold. Did he ever leave it? You will find him now in every ecclesiastical library."

We visit the bedroom. Of all the rooms in this ecclesiastical lodging, it is the least intimate and the most theatrical. The Judge is enchanted to cede to the father of *Thais* this imposing mahogany bed whose complicated architecture is reared on a pretentious platform, its canopy supported by giddy cupids, and ornamented with carved appendages, and mirrors, and garlands of

imitation flowers, a luxury of pomp that takes the Master somewhat aback.

He sighs :

“ What a noble field of battle ! And you are really so generous as to yield it to me. Where will you go to make proof of that prowess that befits your age ? ”

Our host explains that there is an empty flat upstairs, belonging to his mother, now in Europe, where he will be completely comfortable.

The bathroom gives on to the garden, of which we make the round ; a tiny place, but designed with lawn, alleys, and in a tool- (baptized hot-) house a few orchids. Thence we return by the dining-room, a cheerful smiling room, full of Oriental carpets and china, to find the staff—coachman, valet, housemaid, cook and gardener—drawn up in line like recruits ready to be presented to their new colonel. The Judge names them and their functions, and hands over power and keys, a ceremony acknowledged by salaams from the servants and a protective bow from the Master.

“ You are at home here, and all that is here is yours,” says the Judge. “ My ambition is that during your stay you should imagine yourself not at Buenos Ayres but at Paris. It is for you to give orders. Henceforth I am but your guest. Every morning the cook shall come to take orders for luncheon. You will arrange the menu and tell her for how many to cook. The valet has the wine-list to give you. I am rather proud of my cellar ! Like my library you will only find French names there. Tell Antonio what you prefer : Bordeaux, Burgundy, or champagne.”

The menials disappear below stairs and the host above.

“ He is charming,” says Anatole France over and over again. “ Angelic man ! The very angel of hospitality. They say indeed he has a special taste in love. Some-

thing too much of a hellenist! What matter to us, so the fare be sound and the house cosy? Our angel, in exile on this earth, orders things as best he can and not as he would. He has his own prescription. We have ours. We shall camp, as they say, on our respective positions.

"Did you observe the bed he has the nobility to offer me? It's not a bed, but a cathedral! Maybe the cathedral has been profaned, but we will purify it—reconcile it, as clerics say. We will give it back to orthodoxy. Since the most gracious of hosts gives us the right to invite our guests under his roof, let us ask Mademoiselle, during our exile, to play the part of mistress of this house. Her charming presence will cleanse the spot of ill-fame."

I cannot help remarking that his rigorous criticism of the collection has cast a shade over our amiable host.

"And what did I say to hurt him? I covered him with crowns."

"With crowns of thorns. You revealed to him that his Mignard was a fake, that his Pliny was a fake, that his apostles were fakes——"

"Is it possible? I took no notice at all. Never mind, I will mend all that at lunch."

The mending is not without slips. The presence of the Duenna, who thrones it while absorbing the most succulent morsels with a mien of majestic tragedy, visibly incommodes our Mæcenus, who barely speaks to her and responds to her advances by curt monosyllables.

In vain Anatole France recites the heroic death of Pliny the elder, victim of scientific curiosity. In vain does he give the stamp of authenticity, by many a proof, as decisive as it is unexpected, to the marble medallion and the Mignard and the apostles' door. The atmosphere is acid and smacks of cold-catching. We make up by



application to the meal. The wines are excellent. Buenos Ayres, we realize, is an international city.

"Every nation of Europe," explains our Mæcenás, "has brought its own speciality to this Babel of ours. Italy gives us cooks, pastrycooks, ice-cream, and ecclesiastics. For the Argentines are ardently Catholic, yet show less zeal when it comes to recruiting heaven's militia. They are willing to give some money to the Church, but not their children. Being thus less pious than Abraham. Menservants are furnished by the thrifty Spaniards. The Basques go in for horse raising, the English for commerce, and the Germans for finance; the most powerful banks are in the latter's hands."

"And we French?" asks Anatole France.

"Few Frenchmen come here. They succeed perhaps in the luxury trades, dressmaking and so on. I don't dare mention the speciality of Frenchwomen."

"I can guess. Lovemaking!"

"It is true, my dear Master. That is the fact. Every light o' love here is reputed French."

"Highly flattering to our nation!"

"It is a flattery that amounts to fraudulent imitation sometimes. Thus in houses of pleasure you may be offered dreadful females from Bremen or Hamburg, who will splutter with a strident Teutonic accent: "*Tu sais, je suis de Paris, mon joli blond.*" Every well-dressed, I should say overdressed, woman in the street risks being followed, accosted, and receiving a proposition: she is taken—forgive me!—for a professional from Paris. People would not for anything behave so to an Argentine lady, for the laws are extremely severe upon this point. The chase is forbidden upon the public highway. Any woman being molested has only to appeal to a *vigilente*—a policeman—who without further evidence, brings the offender to book and inflicts a fine on the

spot. No delay or documents, it is true. But the fine is heavy. Madrigals here end by costing the singer dear."

"You do well to warn me. We shall be on our guard. Had I known your rigorous laws, perhaps I should have stayed in France. A town where one can't start a flirtation in the street is no town, but a convent. Convent, did I say? But there are convents of most tender disposition. It is a prison!"

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### MIDNIGHT SUPPERS

Our comedians are to lodge at the Hôtel de l'Odéon, which abuts the theatre. It is a jumble of sordid garrets, mouldy courts, and unequal stories, strung together by capricious corridors, arbitrary staircases, and oblique passages. The rooms are dark and stinking. But special terms have been made for the actors. Besides, their abode is virtually in the wings, where they can almost sleep and eat, and at one bound leap from their beds on to the boards.

After the performance we feast on scraps and biscuits—a truly modest debauch. The Duenna has dug out of her box some morsels of chocolate dating from Noah, while the pride of our leading tragic lady is a sausage that has crossed the line. Petrified biscuits are softened in a wretched laxative champagne that owns, alas! no affinity with the country of Joinville and Joan of Arc and La Fontaine. But the mummers have strong teeth and strong gizzards and nothing whets the appetite like lung-exercise. They discuss the takings, abuse the manager, belaud or criticize one another as the case may be. On the table stand heavy decanters with the meagre bouquets offered to the actresses. We are half

dead of sleeplessness, and try to imagine startling amusements.

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*CHRISTIANS OF THE SECOND ZONE*

The ladies have turned the cold shoulder on his lecture, and in the Odéon the empty boxes form a wreath of dead flowers. Here and there is a spectatress of courage enough to brave the ecclesiastical thunderbolt, for the archbishop has launched a furious fulmination against Anatole France. In his eyes the French writer has crossed the seas but to preach atheism. He is Satan's drummer.

"He has excommunicated me," says France in the wings. "And I—I excommunicate him. Thus did Sâr Peladan at the time of his quarrel with the Vatican. True, I am not a 'Sâr'; but what prevents me from being one? And what right has this Argentine bishop to interfere with me? Was I born in his diocese? Has the rascal even a diocese? Consider: where was the ineffable mystery of our redemption accomplished? In the Ancient World. It was for the inhabitants of the Ancient World that the blood of the Just was pressed forth under the weight of the Cross. Not the tiniest drop for the New. At school—for He went to school, with His cross on His shoulder—little Jesus learned the geography of Ptolemy. It was for that geography that He died! When He said to His disciples: Go and teach the nations, what nations did He mean? The Hurons, the Papuans, the Botocudos? Another proof. On the day of Pentecost, in the midst of a sort of electrical disturbance, the apostles received the gift of tongues. What tongues? Syriac, Armenian, Greek, and Latin. This archbishop doesn't even know his own religion!"

Someone remarks :

“ The ancients were aware that the earth was round and that the antipodes existed. Witness Diogenes, Laertius, Plato——”

“ You forget Virgil ! Not the poet, but the Bishop of Salzburg, the apostle of Carinthia. He taught that there were other men below the earth. Pope Zachary summoned him to Rome. Virgil then declared that these men below the earth did not descend from Adam and therefore were not redeemed by Jesus Christ. His orthodoxy was thus so brilliantly established that he was raised to the Bishopric of Salzburg. If I have the Archbishop of Buenos Ayres against me, I have the sainted Bishop Virgil on my side.”

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#### *THE MIRACLE OF THE CROSS-ROADS*

“ We French are very vain of our race. ‘ It’s the wittiest in the universe,’ we say. A Jewish god, forsooth ! A Corsican emperor ! What is race ? The dictionary replies : ‘ An assembly of individuals belonging to the same species and having a common origin and characteristics.’ Example : the race of Abraham, the seed which according to Scripture shall flood the world. The race of monkeys. The negroid race. Well, look round at these magnificent children, these elegant ladies, these strapping yet fine-drawn men. There is an Argentine race, which may be recognized by the brilliance of its complexion, the way the pupil of the eye dilates, and by a certain corpulence in the young men and in the women. I am speaking merely from the physical point of view. Well, it’s a race not more than a hundred years old ; and yet, it’s constant in its variety. Where does it come from ? From everywhere. If you were,

one evening, to arrest all the people walking on the boulevards in Paris—Italians, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Germans, English—cram them all, men and women, into the holds of a number of ships—an operation that in the time of Cromwell in England used to be called pressing them—and then disembark them somewhere in America on a desert but fertile bank, this street rabble, this dust of cities, without catechism or code or literature, would, as we see, form a most harmonious race. What makes a race is really not, as is commonly believed, the selection exercised by love, or politics, or metaphysics, but climate, the soil and its fruits, and our food.”

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*NOTHING SO LOVELY AS THE NUDE*

“Modesty is ugliness. Who can count the crimes of this Christian virtue? The Ancients went about all but nude, like to the statues that decorated their ways and their temples. Those marble statues were their models, and thus they took care of their bodies with a minuteness that astonishes us. They passed a good part of their day at the baths, or in the wrestling school, plucking out superfluous hair and oiling themselves. Then the slums and rag markets of Rome put forth an epidemic of blear-eyed, leprous little men, afflicted with varicose veins, whose legs were twisted and their bellies ludicrous. And over all these horrors modesty was draped. Infirmary was erected into a virtue. Ever since then the world is sad. Our children, our girls, and our young men hide the smile of their clean young flesh under the absurdity of modern clothes.”

“You would be badly punished,” said someone present,



"if you were named president of a committee to judge our bodies in the nude."

"On the contrary. Once at Quiberon I saw a number of horsemen bathing their mounts in the sea. They were nude on their beasts in the midst of the silver waves. They were Bretons, and you know blood isn't exactly blue in Brittany. Well, in the light and the salt water, they were touched with a tint of rose red—it was like a mythological group!"

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### THE HOUSE IS OURS

The Duenna is installed at the Judge's, where she is now to be the mistress of the house. Her joy is to move the furniture about. She must have the blood of a furniture-remover in her veins.

The moment she comes into a room, she begins. She puts on the right hand what was on the left. She is for symmetry. Chairs, pictures, vases, statuettes must go two by two, like girls in a "crocodile" or recruits bound for barracks.

Now the Judge sticks to his own scheme of things like a limpet to its rock. Moreover, he is thoroughness itself and you may see him on his knees, smoothing out a wrinkle in the carpet. Thus we have a duel between Duenna and Judge, in which the weapons are arm-chairs, bronzes, and sofas. The battle continues at table in an arctic atmosphere of mutual contempt, expressed in terms of exaggerated courtesy.

Modesty, however, is not the note of the star's triumph, and she invites to her Capitol all the geese and all the ganders of the company. As regards the men, our Georges Dandin of the Argentine says nothing. But you should see his nausea as he watches the actresses

gobble his victuals and lap up his wine. If only the pretty geese would be content to peck! But they fancy themselves at an hotel. They criticize!

"Fowl here is not so good as in France."

"This, Bordeaux? Aramon!"

"You only find really good cooking in Paris, my dear."

Relegated to the bottom of his own table, the Judge follows with anxious frowns the jaw and the jaws. He is partial to symbolical decoration of the table. Sometimes it is a procession of penguins—an allusion to Anatole France's masterpiece—sometimes monkeys or dogs in slobbery Copenhagen china. At others a riot of cupids in a substance resembling lard, and again shepherdesses in imitation Dresden or imitation Sèvres, all green and mossy. For great occasions there is a mirror lake with swans and a fountain and flowers in china. Our host is as much attached to this little bazaar as a marmot to her young. Does someone chip a wing of one of his loves, or spill a drop of wine on the snail-like dogs, he grows pale. And he visibly counts the bottles and cakes.

The Duenna presides with stage modesty, distributing orders and congratulations as if she were at home, nor neglecting her own plate. Oh yes, this dinner has been passable. That has been impossible.

Facing her, France eats like a wolf, nods like an idol with his head at all the sweets and the bitters, smiles at everyone—the butler, his host, the tragedy star, the comedy star—and as from a tired tap lets drop anecdotes from his reservoir. Accustomed to speak themselves and to be applauded, the company soon tire of his rivulet and interrupt tales of Tacitus and Tallemant with most contemporary allusions:

"What were the takings last night? B—— had three calls and G—— two."

"The Ingénue had six bouquets sent her."

"What a little idiot! She's engaged to be married and loves her fiancé, who's at Rio, and is actually faithful to him. Goose! As if an actress, a good actress, could be chaste! When you have to be Chimène, Pauline, Hermione, Phèdre and Camille by turns, you must have a flame in your heart and snap your fingers at bourgeois prejudices!"

When the wine bottle empties or there is delay in serving a second helping, the interpreters of Corneille and Racine tap their glasses with their knives, France, the while, developing some archaic thesis like a yard measure slowly unwinding itself.

Cruelly does the Judge expiate his passion for literature and glory. After the meal, he puts back his pen-guins, monkeys, and loves in their case, counts the coffee spoons and replaces them in the canteen. When does he work at his cases, and when deliver justice? He cannot bear women. In order to receive Anatole France, he has quarrelled with his mother who, pious woman, has set sail for France, and his house has become an annex of the greenroom in which the Duenna queens it.

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VARIORUM

Every morning come sacks and bags and cartloads of letters and postcards with congratulations and requests for autographs, to which I have to reply as from the Master. By force of practice I can produce a fair imitation of his illustrious scribble. I have a set phrase to which I always stick. This is it: "Slowly but inexorably, the future fulfils the dreams of wise men."

This morning I was at my fiftieth edition. Surely I had the right to a variant? So I wrote: "Slowly, but

inexorably, the future fulfils the dreams of madmen." My pen ran on with a sense of ease. Behind me, Anatole France, who had approached in silent slippers, approved : " Far, far more true ! "

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### TAILS AND TIES

Dinner is over, and they have dragged Anatole France to the Colon, the opera of Buenos Ayres, said to be the largest, wealthiest, and most expensive in the world. *Rigoletto* is being given.

From the presidential box he contemplates a resplendent array of brilliant women, on whose milk-white shoulders shine diamonds the size of marbles and pearls like eggs. (This is literally true.) But for the most part the fair spectators are dark.

" At Paris," remarks M. Bergeret, " the blonde type dominates in theatre audiences. Indeed, after the age of forty, all our women are blonde."

The tenor sings in Italian, the prima donna in Spanish. Admirable voices, but a shade too much given to trills and acrobatics. You would think that the artist had made a bet that he would keep an egg in the air for a quarter of an hour. When, out of breath, he lets it come down, the whole audience yells deliriously to comfort him and beg him to send it up again to the flies. But the smaller parts and costumes are far from being on the same level as the voices. The prima donna wears a crinoline as in George Sand's time ; and the tenor in a terrible nocturnal scene appears armed with a poignard and a bedroom candlestick.

Next morning the fashionable newspapers comment with irony, and indeed indignation, on the negligence of our attire. We had worn dinner-jackets. Dinner-jackets

in the presidential box! And our ties! What ties had we not worn! What savages are these Europeans! The article ends with this flippant counsel: "A black tie, my dear Master!"

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*VISIT TO THE MUSEUM*

It is a regular bazaar. When a gentleman of the Argentine has amassed a certain number of pesos, he goes in for antiques. He goes to Europe, buys right and left several tons of pictures, statues, curiosities, and historical souvenirs, and on his death bequeaths the pick of the bunch to his native town, which accepts the lot. There are whole rooms filled with impudent copies of works that adorn the most famous galleries in Europe. No matter! Folk here imagine that the Old World has copied the New. The pictures are hung, not according to their schools, but by their size and date of entry, thus forming a perfect symphony of incoherence. From amidst this dust-heap France has unearthed a delicious little Goya, representing a halt of gipsies under a bridge. He takes down the canvas from the dark corner in which it is exiled, and as he rubs up the colours with his handkerchief, damped with spittle, gives little cries of delight:

"What a ravishing figure the dancing-girl has! What movement! What ellipsis in the drawing! And the colour! Astounding fellow, Goya—he could make sunshine with bitumen. Why is the picture drowned in this sea of rubbish? It's the pearl of your museum."

The director assists at this exhumation with visible embarrassment and in the depths of gloom.

"You believe it is a Goya, Master?"

"Do I believe! I believe it as much as I believe I am Anatole France. It simply shouts at you."



"But no one knows whence the picture comes. It has no papers to vouch for it."

"And I! Have I any papers to vouch for me? I assure you I have neither my birth certificate, nor the letter informing me of my election to the Academy. And yet I am Anatole France of the *Académie française*."

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### BOMBILLAS

He inquires about the antiquities of the country and receives the confession that all the antiquities come from our side of the ocean: the country is brand-new. If you want to find something ancient, you must go to the Pampas or the Sierras, where there are Indian burying-places.

The suggestion does not attract him. He has no taste for Indians.

"Have they written anything—a poem, an Iliad, or an Odyssey? No. As for painting, all the Indians painted was their own bodies. For literature, they stuck quills in their hair. Savagery and incompetence. But what did the Spaniards do? They built some forts and innumerable churches. Forts are as like one another as peas. As for their sanctuaries, they are all the Jesuit style and in brick, because they had no stone. A rock here is a rarity. Anyone wanting to carve a statue must bring his marble from Europe. Your local Croesus buys a façade for his palace and has it sent by boat in numbered pieces, ready to be put together. They do what they can to mask their poverty. It is the triumph of almond icing. Over walls of brick they pour cascades of plaster and stucco.

"Their national architecture? It is borrowed from every other capital in the world. The palace of Congress

is a hotchpotch of Roman, Greek, Italian, and French. Imagine the colonnade of the Louvre, supporting the Parthenon, with the Pantheon on top, all powdered with allegories and statues and balustrades and terraces. A sort of Babylonian cake. It reminds me of Gustave Doré's illustrations to the Bible. In the rain, it is a nightmare."

"Ah, but there is the *bombilla*." They had forgotten that.

"The *bombilla*?"

"To be sure! The recipient for sucking up *maté*."

"What is *maté*?"

"The Paraguayan herb, the tea of South America. First you grind the leaves of that invigorating plant to powder. Then you put a good pinch into the *bombilla*, which is a calabash hollowed out, add some sugar, and scald it. Then you suck up the infusion through a metal pipe. It was the early colonists' drink and it was that gave them such stout hearts. There are many most precious and curious *bombillas* in the possession of the old families, some of ordinary metal, others of niello, and some have tripods attached to them; but this is a modern accessory. The *bombilla* and the pipe passed from hand to hand and lip to lip. Everyone had a suck at it. The ceremony of *maté* shall be put in force again for the Master's benefit."

"How truly kind!"

Now we live under a hail of *bombillas*. *Bombillas* of all colours and all materials. Evidently the word has gone round. A parcel arrives, done up in ribbon.

"Another *bombilla*, I wager."

"You burn, my friend."

Anatole France refuses to cut the ribbon. He is sick of *bombillas*. It is the Duenna who collects them. What will she do with them? Open a shop in France? She must have gleaned at least thirty.

However, since the Master has been told that *maté* possesses invigorating virtues, he has proposed to try this herculean infusion. We proceed according to the ancient rite. The Paraguayan herb has been scalded in the calabash, and the *bombilla* passes from hand to hand, as if we were playing hunt-the-slipper, and from mouth to mouth. It should give strength, if tastelessness gives it, for there is hardly any taste at all. The chief result appears to be a burnt tongue.

The Master waits a certain time to feel the effects. In vain. No miracle takes place.

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#### HOW TO WARM UP A MEETING

“ Ah, if only Briand were here ! ” he sighs. “ He is a past-master in the crafty art of warming up a meeting. I was dragged once, on a summer Sunday afternoon, to the Trocadero, to take the chair at some meeting or other of protest, soon after the Dreyfus case—one of the last explosions of the cracker. Pressensé was to speak, too, and Comrade Briand, who was then a Communist. There I was, hoisted up on the platform, at three o'clock on a baking afternoon. A meeting of protest on a Sunday—what a mistake !

“ On Sunday the proletariat, the workmen, put on their clean shirt and their go-to-meeting clothes—generally we have the soul of our clothes—tie, collar and straw hat. Being got up like the middle classes, they were no longer revolutionaries, but a true middle-class public. They came in late, in bunches, and took their seats disgustedly,

having hoped for music. I read my manuscript. I am no orator. An orator is someone who talks without knowing what he is talking about. Jaurès is a great orator. I'm no good at all at it: my critical sense never leaves me. Plodding through my address, I could see, above the leaves, the revolutionaries snugly seated in the stalls, with their wives fanning themselves and the little boys in sailor suits. From time to time a brutal hand would fall on the innocent little sailors' faces. Why? They had been shuffling about, or picking their noses, or otherwise offending the laws of morality or politeness. I went on spiritlessly. A sudden miowling from an infant, greedy, not of eloquence, but of milk. Good mother thereupon undid her bodice and offered her beauteous breast to the youngster who, little booby, shut his eyes. As for me, I was lost in admiration. I have always been fascinated by beauty in spheric form: it is the most divine that exists. But I was getting mixed up in my sheets. Briand, in his trombone voice, prompted me: 'Cut it short. We might be in a refrigerator. Cut it short.'

"I skipped three or four sheets without anybody noticing—even myself. But it was so much ballast wasted. From time to time the bang of a seat going up spoke to a spectator deserting his post. 'God damn it all, cut it short!' growled Briand, his moustaches drooping more than ever half-mast. I leap from sheet to sheet: in vain, for each second the temperature becomes more like the North Pole. 'I've had enough of this,' says Aristide. 'I'm getting chilblains. It's time to warm up the meeting.'

"At the word, in came the Ass. You know, the typical ninny, the nincompoop, who has an air of having dropped straight out of the moon. He lives somewhere round the Place Maubert, and is a vague commercial traveller, or

counterjumper. He has had lunch, shaved ; he has all his Sunday before him. As he is going out he greets his concierge :

“ ‘ Good morning, Madame Mignolet.’

“ ‘ Ah, it’s you, Monsieur Chenivesse. I know you thought once or twice of going to the Trocadero : I have a whole pile of tickets for to-day.’

“ ‘ Tickets for what, Madame Mignolet ? ’

“ ‘ For a concert to be sure. Anatole France is singing.’

“ ‘ Does he sing well, old Anatole ? ’

“ ‘ I should just think so ! He’s from the Opera, or the Institute, something grand of that sort, anyway. The tickets are gratis.’

“ ‘ Thank you kindly, Madame Mignolet.’

“ So off goes the Ass by underground, and arrives at the Trocadero at the precise minute when Briand decides to warm up the icy audience. It was Providence who sent him. Pushing open the padded door, with uneasy nose he sniffed the sunny, half-empty hall ; then, driven on by his evil genius, prepared to make use of Mme. Mignolet’s ticket. Down the gangway he came a-tiptoe, making a noise that only Asses a-tiptoe can make. Briand shoved me out of the way with his elbow, and leaped in front of me, a second Mirabeau confronting de Brézé.

“ ‘ I call on you to explain yourself,’ he shouted at the Ass.

“ ‘ Me ? ’ stammered the poor creature, lost in a forest of tip-up seats.

“ ‘ Yes-s ! you ! Dare to repeat out loud what you have been whispering in the background ! ’

“ ‘ I ! whispering in the——’

“ ‘ No pretence ! I know your name ! ’

“ ‘ My name is Casimir Desiré Chenivesse. I am an employee at the Bon Petit Diable and I was going out without any special idea when Madame Mignolet, my



concierge, said: "If you want a ticket for the Trocadero \_\_\_\_\_,"

"Enough lies! You are an infamous reactionary. You are he whom Molière tried to crush, and who crushed Molière—Tartufe! In the name of the noble citizens who fill this hall, I call on you to explain yourself in the light of day. We have had enough of being stabbed in the back by the minions of Loyola! We will not refuse the combat! Off with the mask!"

"Really, the audience began to warm up. To the air of 'To the lamp-post with him! The lamp-post!' they began to shout: 'The platform! The platform!'—the women, naturally, being the most vehement.

"Then I saw pass over my head, like a thunderbolt, a pair of thick-soled shoes. An instant, and the pair of thick-soled shoes rebounded into a corner of the hall, where they spat out four or five teeth. From that moment the audience was enthusiastic. I could go on with my address without skipping a syllable, and every sentence was acclaimed with frenzy. What an ovation! At the end we were chaired in triumph. Only the luckless Casimir Desiré Chenivresse could never understand why he had lost five or six teeth. It was to warm up the meeting!

"When a meeting is already warmed up, there is another dodge, to cut the ground from below the feet of an objector. You take him under your protection and, demanding silence, address the audience thus: 'Citizens, Monsieur So-and-So has come here to raise the voice of reaction.' Don't forget to say 'Monsieur': it is essential. Then you go on: 'It is easy to imagine what he will say to you. But you will prove to him that, whatsoever the degree of your just indignation, you are free men! You will let the viper hiss! You will patiently endure his blasphemies against democracy! Pray silence

for Monsieur So-and-So.' Rarely can Monsieur So-and-So mount two steps towards the platform. At the third, he is meat for the ambulance."

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#### DRIED DEDICATIONS

This morning the reception is reserved for students. Several of them have been in France. They bring with them *éditions de luxe* of his works and beg the Master to enhance their value by decorating them with his signature. The ceremony of the autographs begins.

Quill in hand, Anatole France officiates, like a bishop with his crozier. With languid air he spreads his elbows on the blotter, almost holding his breath over the rich paper, on which his pen executes a minuet. According as the young man has a more, or a less, pleasing countenance, the inscription is more or less lyric. What is difficult is the names, which have to be spelt laboriously, letter by letter. The beads of the whole chaplet of epithets is told: "To the ingenious—To the witty—To the learned—To the subtle——"

The students go off, each with his patent. One, a great vain, woolly ass, rushes at the book France has autographed for him, laps up, as it were, the inscription like a glass of spirits, staggers, crushes it under the blotting-paper and then to his heart.

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#### SALAD COMPETITION

There has been a gala performance at the Odéon for the benefit of some charity or other, with ovations and delirious applause, and the ladies find it too prosaic to go straight to bed after such a triumph.

"Let us organize a salad competition!" suggests the Duenna.

"A salad competition?" queries Anatole France.  
"And what may that be, my life?"

The Duenna explains. They will raid the larder, and the dickens is in it if they don't find a few potatoes. These shall be boiled and distributed equally among the actresses, together with as many salad-bowls as there are competitors. Then the Ingénue, the Duenna, and the other leading lady will confection potato-salad according to their several tastes, taking care each to serve her exquisite recipe in perfection. Then a row of numbered and anonymous salad-bowls will be placed on the table, we shall taste, compare, and vote—of course by ballot.

"Is only the substance to count? Shall we take no stock of the architecture and the adornments that make your mouth water?"

Both substance and form shall count.

"And who shall preside over this tasty competition?"

"You shall, dear Master. It is an honour that belongs of right to the *Académie française*."

"Truly I prefer a salad competition to one of eloquence or poetry. In matters of the table, judgment is based on certainties; as, this is too sweet, and that is too salt. Whereas in poetry——! Now why shouldn't the Academy distribute some of the innumerable wreaths at its disposal to cooks, male and female. On St. Monthon's day they don't fail to recompense a score of exemplary chambermaids who have tended octogenarian and uremic masters for love. These sainted women have used up their time, their savings, and their patience. The spiritual daughter of the great Cardinal who thus sheds a tear over pots of gruel—the Academy of course, not the Cardinal—is wrong to overlook the claims of the cooking-pot. If ever I take my place again under the

cupola I will mention it to my brethren in Immortality."

"Now, gentlemen, out of here! Let us work. Go and smoke and chatter in the little drawing-room. We'll call you when the masterpieces are ready."

Our actresses have kept on their theatrical costumes and make-up. Tricked out as sultanas, gaudy as queens of cards, with eyelashes stiff as lances, they hurl themselves on the buffet, rifle it of the cruet and hardboiled eggs, and fight over the mustard and English bottled sauces that unite the sweetness of jam with the bite of Cayenne pepper. All this with little cries as of virgins surprised in their bath. We feign insatiable curiosity.

"Ah, I've caught you at it, fair Peeping Tom!"

"Peeping Tom yourself! Insolence!"

"Fair Peeping Tom of the salad-bowl!"

"But I see your secret. Capers!"

"Hush! That's not fair. Say nothing! No one must look. Now then, out with you. Into the little drawing-room!"

We protest with exaggerated ardour through the partition, and to while away the time M. Bergeret spins a laborious discourse on the word "salad."

"Evidently 'salad' comes from *sel*. Without salt, no salad.

'Have a care, if you are wise,  
Of salads and of women's eyes.'

What rubbish! All is grist that comes to the mill: the bonny lass and the flaunting quean. That's the truly wise man's motto.

"But why were certain helmets in the Middle Ages called 'salads'? What connexion was there between a headpiece and a lettuce?"

From time to time M. Bergeret stops the tap, looks

round the door and seems to sniff the competitors with his great equine nose.

"Have you no need for a scullion or a turnspit, ladies? Here's one ready to work for a trifle. No wages at all. He'll take payment in kind!"

"Run away, little cheat!"

But he has had time to concert with the Duenna, and carelessly confides to us: "I should not be surprised if Number 3 carried off the prize with some ease."

At length the door is thrown open, and the salad bowls are passed round. We cry our enthusiasm. Marvels! Poems! Ecstasies! But the Master, intent on log-rolling, whispers to me:

"Vote for Number 3: there's a secret in it."

We scribble figures on scraps of paper; then twist them with mystery. The Ingénue goes round with Anatole France's hat, for him to tell the result of the ballot, and the Duenna is unanimously acclaimed "Queen of the Salad." For we have conspired to please our grizzled Céladon.

Her Majesty's health is drunk. She is embraced. We embrace one another. We supplicate her to reveal—but are we worthy?—her incomparable secret to the world.

"Besides," remarks Anatole France, "what is a recipe—literary, culinary, or amatory? Mere words, nothing. All is in the manner, the handling. That is the grace, the magnificent and arbitrary bounty, the dower of the Lord of all things to those that please him."

Finally the Duenna consents to reveal her wonderful recipe. Cunning thing, for vinegar she has substituted the more aristocratic lemon juice. And there you are!

Next we play at cards, the triumphant lady watching over the Master and teaching him suits, values, and trumps. As a pupil he shows no great aptitude, and moreover holds his cards so that everyone can see his hand.



It is nearly day. The Master catches me in the act of an invincible yawn.

"Go to bed, my child. As for me, I am very well as I am. Let my night be here." And, pointing to the Duenna: "Mademoiselle has still much to teach me. We will meet at the Judge's at lunch."

My return home through unknown lanes is tinged with melancholy. What am I doing here? What profit have I of such burlesque vigils? Would not sleep be better? Is it for this that I have changed earth and sky? Silvery dawn comes aggressively over the chess-board of streets on which the *vigilante* looks like one of the chessmen. The morning breeze seems to twist and turn the shadows of gossamer night, and on the rosy threshold of a new day its rays pierce me with a disgusted sense of dreary uselessness.

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#### WE VISIT THE CATHEDRAL

"A characterless grange: the stables of Bethlehem." So says Anatole France.

At the high altar a priest is polishing off Mass with a volubility as alarming as that of Polichinelle. Like Polichinelle, he is certainly Italian. To Anatole France's high wrath he swallows a good half of his incantations.

"What a cad! How disgustingly he wields the holy vessels! Can such a gabbler conceivably put enchantment on the force of the bread and the blood of the wine? No! He is like a tenth-rate cook scouring his cauldrons.

"Really these Italians push familiarity with God to the point of indecency. Because the Pope is under their thumb, they imagine all heaven theirs. Eternity is their home farm: sacraments and indulgences, their milch

cow. Only their hand is a bit heavy on the divine udder !

“ Nothing is less edifying than a religious ceremony at Rome. I assure you that you can see everything—yes, everything !—being done in churches that are the most celebrated in Christendom. And the clergy is in unison with the faithful.”

He tells the story of a good woman who approached the holy table with a child in her arms, a little thing that stretched out its innocent fist to catch the white wafer, taking it for a sweetie or a butterfly. Twice or thrice the priest gently pushed away the chubby, sacrilegious fingers ; then finally, to save the bread of the angels, lisped cheerfully : “ Tata, ickle sing, Tata ! ”

“ At the beginning of each year, the children of Rome go to pay their compliments to the Holy Child. It is a very ancient and venerable idol, representing the youthful Jesus and carved, they say, by some apostle or other from an olive tree—that grew on the Mount of Olives naturally. A very rich doll it is, with a wealth of rings and necklaces, pearls and diamonds to make a ballet dancer’s mouth water. The precious wooden infant is sometimes brought out of its sanctuary and taken in a gorgeous coach to dying persons rich enough to pay for such a luxury : I’ve seen the masquerade more than once. As the coach rolls by, the crowd kneels, crosses itself and acclaims the doll like a prince or a cardinal.

“ At Christmas, as I told you, the little Romans go to make speeches to little Jesus. It’s an amusing scene. I went once with Madame. The brats are gathered round a miniature pulpit, all starched and waxed and curled, lined up in a queue on the spiral staircase, while, below, their mothers comfort them with a last kiss before sending them to confront the fire—the fire of the taper. Suppose the infant orator should be struck dumb—what a scandal !

The honour of the family is at stake ! ' Courage, my darling ! ' The darling, however, does not lack courage. You should see with what sounding, pretentious gravity he gets through his lines. They are lovely creatures, those small Romans. Worthy to serve at the table of the gods, till they're big enough for the beds of goddesses. Then hardly has he achieved the declamation, but darling becomes himself again. He blows a kiss to the idol, climbs over the wooden rail, and comes down on his backside, the pulpit of truth."

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*BLASCO IBAÑEZ*

Competition. Another lecturer has turned up in Buenos Ayres. It is Blasco Ibañez. From the first round it is almost a knockout for us. An immense, delirious crowd has gone to greet him at the station and carried him in triumph to his hotel, where, from the balcony, the novelist improvises a furious harangue that convulses the surging throng below. His powerful fists thump the iron railing. He flings his heart, handkerchief, and cuffs to the rabble. He is at once a matador swaggering in the arena, a tenor plunging into his encore, capuchin friar preaching, king of all street hawkers, poet, improviser, and dentist at a fair. Long after he has stopped speaking the people wait under the balcony. Disorder is threatened, and to appease it the Spanish author has to begin his warm-hearted address anew five or six times.

Blasco Ibañez' programme too is bad for us. We must confess it : his bill of fare is more copious and varied than our own. We have but one dish and that a tough one : Rabelais. Blasco Ibañez is to talk in turn of Napoleon, Wagner, Renaissance painters, the French Revolution, Cervantes, cookery, philosophy, contem-

porary drama, social questions, science, and the Argentine.

"He's a living orchestra," murmurs Anatole France. "You know, one of those wandering musicians in a Chinese hat full of bells and tinkles, who plays the clarionet while he beats the big drum with his foot, like knife-grinders. People really can't expect me to do that at my age."

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### STRATAGEM

"No, I must go back to Europe, but it won't be easy for me. I have left there, as you know, a terrible friend. How will she greet us? She is by no means patient. She is no long-suffering creature and far from tranquil when disappointed. Do you know what you would do, Brousson, to help your old Master, if you had any friendship for him? You would go back first, by the next boat. We would print in the papers here that it was I who was on board. Who would know the difference, pray? All ship captains are not Loti. Literature is a sealed book to them, specially to English captains. And even if it were Loti, he is such a lunatic!

"At the first stop in Europe—at Lisbon or Bordeaux—Madame would be there on the wharf, revolver in hand of course, and would greet your arrival with a salvo. She has always had a taste for theatrical demonstrations. The son she has brought forth is a musical comedy merchant.

"Intrepidly you would receive the fire, for an enraged woman never hits the bullseye. It's always the inoffensive passer-by who gets the bullet. After the gun display she would calm down. Shooting clears the air, like a thunderstorm. Our Bellonas have hysterics, someone undoes their staylances; they weep, and then write their

memoirs. And meanwhile we two would return on the Italian ship, and I should be just in time to write the preface. You don't answer. You seem cold. Is it possible you lack physical courage? "

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### *PATCHES*

He presides over the Duenna's dressing-room while she makes up, though forced to wait for a while on the threshold of the temple of artificial beauty. When he is allowed to enter the bulk of the work is over. Nothing remains to add but the trifles—powder and patches.

What point will the Duenna touch up with the beauty spot? The Master, snatching it, disserts on this minor artifice of the toilet table.

"The Greek and Oriental women knew how to revive the milky whiteness of their skin with this drop of ink. For example, there is such and such a vase in the Campana collection. And such and such a fresco at Pompeii. But it was in the eighteenth century in France that patches reached their apogee, and received divers epithets according to the place they occupied on a pretty face. At the corner of the eye, the 'Passionate.' In the centre of the forehead, the 'Majestic.' "

The Duenna removes the "Passionate" and puts on the "Majestic."

"The 'Playful' was put here, on the dimple that a smile makes in the cheek."

We try the "Playful."

"A little lower down the 'Galant.' At the corner of the mouth the 'Kiss me.' On the nose, 'Impudence.' On the lips, the 'Coquette.' On a pimple, the 'Concealer.' "



The "Concealer," "Coquette," "Impudence," we try them all in turn. The final choice falls on "Kiss Me."

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### *LUNCH AT THE JOCKEY CLUB*

The building is overpoweringly rich. Paintings there are, and statues, and vases in profusion and as you please, reminding you so invincibly of showrooms at a great shop that you wonder where the price-tickets have got to. Most of the works of art are French—Bonnats and Harpignies and Ziem and Gérôme, overwhelmed by deliriously gilded frames, a bazaar amid which it is refreshing to discover a tiny Fantin-Latour, seductive, pearly, and discreet. An allegory or a muse; but which? A lovely girl's figure, all curves and sweetness.

We are shown Falguière's Venus on the landing of the grand staircase, which statue passes here for the masterpiece of that sculptor and maybe of all modern sculpture. Our cicerones place it far above Rodin's monument to Sarmiento. "What a horror that is!" they say. "The president looks like a vulture."

"Are you sure," asks France, "that this fair creature, who might really serve as a sign for an orthopædist, is the mother of laughter and of the graces? Myself I spy in her a sort of look at once of Montmartre and of Toulouse. A smack of absinthe and garlic. She comes down, not from Olympus, but from the Moulin Rouge. She's no better than she should be!"

A majestic, boring, sumptuous repast is served by superb and innumerable lackeys. We are in evening dress, which François, with his keen sense of what is fitting, has imposed on Anatole France; swallow-tails, starch and all.

"Monsieur France cannot go to the Jockey Club in

a lounge suit. It is all very well to be Monsieur Anatole France, but there are certain higher things. If Madame were here——! As it is, Monsieur France has sufficiently scandalized the folk of the place."

I have noticed it over and over again: imprisoned in the world's polite uniform, the Master loses fifty per cent. of his spirits. He is but a mummy, bound and embalmed. Here, moreover, the surroundings crush him. This immense Second Empire dining-room does not favour learned gossip but demands vociferous harangues. Anatole France's spectacles wander fearfully over the marble and the onyx which the most famous quarries in the world have been ransacked to furnish. Walls of marble, columns of it, pavements of it. In vain the collector's soul seeks for the peace of some quiet detail. The menu is French, cooked by a French chef; but the novelist eats wrathfully. He is in a shocking temper, pays not the slightest attention to the conversation, and lets the flow of varied praise addressed to him pass like the nuisance of a running tap.

The wines of France too flow for us. At dessert we are offered a magnificent fruit of unknown species, in size and colour like a Portuguese quince, but rough-skinned. We are taught how to eat it: it must not be peeled, but cut in half and the pulp daintily tasted with a spoon in the cup made by the rind, as if it were an ice. It is a source of much pride to our hosts, this fruit that ripens not in Europe, and they tell fabulous stories of it. But Anatole France is in a contrary mood.

"It is a fine fruit. Delicious. But it was known to the Ancients. You see it frequently sculptured on trophies on the pediment of Roman buildings. And for all its promise, it is not as good as a peach, a melon, or a cherry."

Coffee served, he pleads fatigue. He is so old—The

new surroundings—The long journey has completely exhausted him—He is in instant need of sleep—etc., etc. His broken appearance and tearful whine give colour to his complainings. So he leaves, tremulously dragging himself through the magnificent and disappointed halls.

Once in the street his spirits revive. Of a sudden he becomes triumphantly young. Sixtus V after the conclave! He hails a cab.

“To the Odéon! These people are intolerable. A banquet without women is a barbarism.”

He is in haste to applaud the Duenna.

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PRINTER'S ERRORS

“Everything is a question of reputation. ‘To him who has shall be given,’ you know. If you are known for a man of wit, everything you say will be amusing. Point will be found in pure nonsense, in very printer’s errors. I published *Sur la Pierre Blanche* first of all, serially, in *Humanité*, and, as I was just starting for Italy with Madame, left the printers well supplied, with each number put separately in the ‘comp’s’ box. My voyage was to last a month, and there were thirty boxes. The whole thing was automatic: a child or a blind man could have set up my serial. I return from Rome. Congratulations! Enthusiasm! ‘You have never done anything bolder!’ I look through the issues of the paper. What an appalling hash! Instead of going through the boxes from top to bottom, the comp had taken them horizontally. It was a perfect puzzle. There wasn’t a single connexion or transition. Well, when the book came out Monsieur X of the *Assistance Publique* said to me: ‘You were wrong to water down your original text.

The version in *Humanité* was far more striking! But then, of course, your circulation depends on the middle-class reader.' Imbecile!

"Don't imagine that such glorious mishaps occur to me alone. I forget the name of the author, but he was celebrated in his day, and being, like Chateaubriand, sublime only in prose, he had let himself go over a sort of unrhymed epic. One of the finest passages, on which he had lavished all the weapons of genius, was the account of a battle. Not a single commonplace had been spared the reader. After a description of the battlefield, he ran on: 'Then were heard cannon thundering, men crying, horses neighing, brass blaring.' Now the handwriting of the prose-poet was exceptionally undecipherable, and instead of brass blaring, the 'comp' put 'brasses braying.' Then the printer's reader went over the proof with the most scrupulous attention. At the words 'horses neighing, brasses braying,' he thought to himself: 'That's a bit of luck for the author that I'm here. But for me, a fine bit of nonsense would have gone in. Brasses braying indeed—obvious mistake! The context shows the right reading.' Forthwith he corrected 'brasses' to read 'asses' and readers heard cannon thundering, men crying, horses neighing, asses braying. What a crescendo!

"The author, it is said, received high praise for this bold passage. He was compared to Homer. He was compared to Job. So he took good care not to correct the sublime nonsense in his second edition."

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### THE MEDALS

An Argentinian sculptor begs for the honour of making a portrait of the Master in the form of a medallion. He will have medals struck too.

The sculptor is a friend of our host. Therefore he must have talent. France says "Yes" with enthusiasm. Then, according to his wont, he makes objections. Will it take much time? He has so much to do! Good, the artist will come during his toilet. But he must understand that he is not to linger.

As a beginning the sculptor asks for two or three photographs, very exact and detailed. An outburst of wrath.

"What! He works upon photographs? He is a jackass. Let me hear no more about him!"

The Duenna intervenes and with a smile calms the storm.

"Why don't you want to be photographed? Are you afraid to leave evidence of your sojourn at Buenos Ayres? And I was so much looking forward to going to the photographer with you!"

"Why then, we will go, my charmer. But I won't have this oaf collaborate with the sun. He shall not put me on his medals."

"He has talent."

"Everyone here has talent! I should like to see somebody who has none!"

"He would give you a complete set of the medals in bronze and in silver."

"What should I do with them? Play at pitch and toss?"

"You would distribute them."

"Distribute medals! I'm neither pope nor king."

"Have you thought of what you will offer on leaving Buenos Ayres to the folk who have received you so well? To our host, for instance?"

"No, I confess I hadn't thought of it. What importance has that? We shall never come here again."

"That's a fine reason!"

"Well then, our host shall have a manuscript: that



of my lectures in the Argentine. It's a lovely specimen. Isn't that enough?"

"Together with your medal in silver, yes."

"So be it. You are as ingenious as charming. You are my serenity and my business-manager and my minister of finance in one. Give this sculptor an appointment in the morning, if possible, as I leap from my bath. But it is you, dear Minerva, whose classic features he should immortalize in his bronze."

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#### *VISIT TO THE LIBRARY*

H—— the librarian is a Frenchman—Gascon indeed, I think. After twenty years' exile his accent still smacks of garlic. H—— enjoys general consideration, a large salary, leisure, and passes for an intellect out of the common: he is highly discontented with his lot.

"Ah!" he sighs, looking at Anatole France, "if only I had stayed in France!" He never says more, but it is easy to end the phrase. If I had only stayed in France! It is I who would have been famous instead of you. It is I who would then come to give lectures here. It is to me that you would be paying visits. I have wasted my life.

H—— writes Spanish as well as he does French. His learning is beyond dispute. He has invented a turning table that makes the most laborious compilations simple. The reader's seat is in the centre of the table which turns on a pivot, while he remains immobile, and brings whatever book he wants under his eyes. Something between a potter's wheel and a roundabout at a fair. A quarter of an hour suffices, by aid of this ingenious machine, to produce any essay worthy any Academy in Europe. The subject matters little: references will be so plentiful that you are sure of making a hit.

When H—— left France, the literary fashion was all for brutality and anticlericalism. And H—— packed anticlericalism and naturalism in his bag and brought them along with him. But the wind has changed in Europe. An impetuous breath of Grace has touched the garden of French letters, and the most rebellious heads are bowed. H—— is disturbed, both for his immortal soul and for his literary prospects, and wonders if it is not time to change sides. France advises him vehemently not to delay. The road to Damascus is almost blocked, he explains. The case of Polyeucte has become epidemic.

H—— has undertaken a great work on Cervantes, one in fact that shall be definitive. The author of *Don Quixote*, he maintains, is an overrated writer who knew Spanish badly and wrote it worse. And from a drawer in his famous turning table H—— pulls out a copy of Cervantes' works, slashed all over with corrections like a schoolboy's essay.

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### THE THEFT OF THE CROWN JEWELS

While B—— was pumping out the sentimentalities of *Le Père Lebonnard* on the stage, thieves broke into his room at the hotel, and stole all his theatrical jewellery. We heard the news this morning. France's remark was: "What gabies! And what a want of tact to carry off the paste."

The theft has produced a great impression. There are headlines in the papers. Reporters besiege B——, who receives them with the stoic majesty of a monarch having lost his crown. He enumerates the stolen gems. There are those of the king, and those of the queen. He computes their value in francs, in pounds, in pesos, and, like a

river in flood, the value swells from hour to hour. At ten o'clock this morning the actor's treasure was worth fifteen thousand francs. By three it had touched fifty thousand. To-night, by the time B—— puts on his slippers and night-cap, we shall easily reach the hundred thousand mark. France is much entertained by all this excitement. He whispers mysteriously in my ear :

“What a business! The prestige of France herself is involved in it. I will tell you all. But first promise me secrecy. On the point of leaving for his American tour, B——, our national glory that he is, obtained permission to take with him the crown jewels—you know, the ones that slumber and sparkle in their glass coffin in the Apollo gallery. It was in consideration of the eminent services rendered to French thought by B—— and his wife, who are playing *La Tour de Nesles*, *Pour la Couronne*, *le Père Lebonnard*, and other specimens of French genius before antipodean audiences. Lustre had to be added to our theatre : a question of propaganda. At the Gare St. Lazare, at the instant of departure, the assistant secretary of state got into B——'s carriage and there handed him a mysterious case. ‘There, my good B——,’ said he, ‘be discreet and show your genius. You have, in there, the crown of Louis XV, that of Napoleon, the watch of the Bey of Algiers, and the Regent. Above all don't lose the Regent. We are understudying it here with a decanter stopper : that's good enough for sightseers. When you play *La Fille de Roland*, fix the diamond to your doublet. It will be a magnificent effect ! All our prestige will be instantly re-established. We shall easily outdo the Germans over there. The Argentine will buy our books and our cannons. Don't wind up the Bey of Algiers' watch, for it's gone quite dotty ;—but it is studded all over with diamonds. It will do for you in *Lebonnard*. The sword of Charles X—only the hilt is in the box, but you

can stick it on to any old skewer—will do finely in the *Cid*!—What, you laugh? In what a heartless age do we live? But if all is discovered, if it is learned, young wretch, that the crown jewels have been sent on a theatrical tour and that nothing is left in the Apollo gallery but decanter stoppers and bottle ends, oh! Just look out then! The Government will fall and perhaps the Republic too! For God's sake, my child, silence!"

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### THE BATTLE OF SANTA ROSA

Another banquet this evening. The French colony sets itself out to honour Anatole France.

Mingled with our compatriots are local notabilities—financiers, ministers, senators. General Roca, the President of the Republic, cannot come, being in mourning. But his speech will be read and we must work up the reply.

"Idea No. 1: the absence of General Roca is at once to be deplored and yet opportune. Absent, the hero's blushes will be spared and his antique simplicity be unwounded.

"Tell me, you, do you know anything definite about General Roca's habits? We can of course fittingly laud the victorious soldier. He has fought—against whom? The Indians, I think. Someone gave me a note. It was he who won the battle of—there, I don't remember. It was on a scrap of paper; you mislay everything. If I don't know the name of the battle, it's not worth while going to the banquet. Ah, here is our hero's scroll of honour: the battle of Santa Rosa! You would be flummoxed if I asked you where Santa Rosa is! Now what can one say about a general who has won the battle of Santa Rosa? Don't nibble your penholder, but help me to weave this laurel-crown. How wretched you look! You feel no

enthusiasm for the victor of Santa Rosa? Still, we must have something sublime for the dessert. Ah, I have it! We salute the victorious soldier who has shown himself a good citizen, and as one of our poets says, has ever 'bowed his laurels before the laws.' There! If he's not content with that, this hero of Santa Fé—I mean Santa Rosa——!"

"Idea No. 2: the great man of war has been a great man of peace.

"For, don't forget, my friend, we are pacifists and haven't much liking for these gentlemen who rattle their sabres.

"Now, there's another general who will preside at the banquet in place of the hero of Santa—Santa what d'you call it, and there will be a minister or two, and senators. So let us get them in the right order.

"General, your excellencies, my honoured hosts, gentlemen, and dear friends'—have I forgotten anyone?—'In the speech to which you have just listened'—by the way, we must read the speech. There, read it, and without any of your impious nonsense—you guy the most sacred things."

The presidential speech is written in strategic style. General Roca describes, in terms borrowed from military science, the advance of the Argentine Republic by forced marches into all the territories of art and letters. We must follow then in the same style.

"Idea No. 3: We have only been here a month. But that month has been enough for us to discover the soul of the nation. We love and esteem this noble people in which all races and all the human families that till its rich soil are melted and amalgamated to form the most precious living metal. The Argentine to-day has become for the whole world a source of riches as necessary as Egypt was to ancient Italy."



He is distinctly pleased with Egypt and ancient Italy, and thoroughly warmed up, lets himself go over the desk, groaning with dictionaries, and piles of paper :

“ ‘ I am enchanted to see, round this table, all that is grandest among this grand people ’—just see we forget no one—‘ The creators, the pillars of its prosperity, those who have most contributed to its successes of intellect, of law, and of morality.’ He reads it through again with tears in his voice. “ A good bit. Morality and finance generally turn their backs to one another, my friend.”

\* \* \* \* \*

*THE PEARL OF VALETS*

This evening, as François is harnessing him for the theatre, he says, as if negligently, to the man :

“ I am so glad I brought you with me. What should I do without you ? You are an angel—my guardian angel, the guardian angel of the dinner jacket and the swallow tails. They are the criterion by which men are judged here.”

He takes a step or two, trying his brilliant and squeaky pumps, blows his nose, and continues in oily tones :

“ I am much perplexed. I know how attached you are to your mistress. And I know how attached Madame is to you. My stay in America will be longer than I had expected. All sorts of things have gone wrong. And Madame cannot be longer without you. It is a real sacrifice that I am making for my dear friend. You will go back to Europe. Take your ticket to-morrow without more delay.”

He holds out a bundle of notes. François repels the money with grandeur. Then he replies :

“ You are very good, sir. But I am not in your service, sir. I am in Madame’s service. It is Madame who

ordered me to accompany you, sir. To accompany you wherever you went. I shall obey her. She has confided you to me, sir. If it should please you, sir, to make a voyage round the world with a pack of actors and actresses, I shall not abandon you, sir. What I have promised, I have promised. I am a man of honour."

And to show that the illustrious writer is under mortgage to him, François folds the clothes, locks the cupboards, puts the keys in his pocket, and goes out humming.

The Master goes to seek consolation at the Odéon, where the Duenna is playing.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### *THE SEPTENNATE*

Will he get up this morning? He doesn't know. He has had an atrocious night of suffering from fever and nightmare. He didn't know where he was. At the Villa Saïd? With Madame in the Gironde? In America?

"I had lost all idea of geography—the geography of the world and of this bedroom. Where were the two poles—the matches and the night table? It's a horrible bedroom! It's a stage bedroom! In the end, day came."

He does not exaggerate. The examining magistrate's bedroom is as heterodox as his habits. On a raised platform, the bed in the midst resembles a piece of mahogany rockwork. Everything is angels and marmosets and garlands and mirrors and twists and twiddles and fallals. It is rococo made for export. Looking-glasses are arranged so that when you are in bed you see yourself seven or eight times over, back and front. Artificial flowers hang from the ceiling. The burlesque look of the setting is enhanced by the joyous Argentine light

which strikes into the room by three windows, hard, blue, and implacable as a blade of steel.

"Come to the aid of your old Master! Give me your advice, my child! I am helpless; I have neither ideas nor courage, I have no will! I am old."

Everything gives the lie to his plaint. Under the turban-like nightcap of coloured Indian silk, his cunning, sensual eyes burn. They have a thousand little red streaks, like the streaks in a cracked window. Under the lichen of his beard, the skin has that rich ardour of trees ready to burst into leaf. Here and there, by the eyelid, on the nose, at the corner of the lips, is a little pimple. His flannel shirt is dirty. Save Madame and Josephine no one in the world is capable of making the celebrated author change it. His prelate-like hands pick at the lace of the coverlet.

"I know it, my child. You have no need to tell me. I read it in your eyes. I am the most laughable old man in the two worlds—yes, in the Old and in the New, too. If only I knew how to take advantage of my situation, for there is no getting out of it! But, as always, I lack will power. I will and I won't. I vacillate. I am like the pilgrim who made a vow to go to Palestine on foot, taking first three steps forward and then three steps backward. Never did he pray at the Holy Sepulchre. My holy sepulchre, dear friend, is that charming actress who appeared to me on board ship less like a mortal than like a divinity. If a stronger term existed I would use it, the better to express the impression that the sight of her made upon me. You, who are so calm, give me your advice. Should I cast off Madame? Should I marry the Duenna? The ceremony could take place here, before the consul, which would greatly simplify matters, but Madame would kill herself. What is worse, she would kill me first!"

I could not refrain from answering :

“ My dear Master, you are come to preach Rabelais to the Argentines, and you are so immersed in your subject that it has become real life to you. Remember the words of Panurge : ‘ Marry, and you will do well. Marry not, and you will do better.’ ”

He twists about in his rococo bed, like a little fish in the frying-pan. The mattress groans. The garlands shake.

“ My friend, my friend, I am asking for advice and not for irony. This is not a joke.

“ The affair is of importance and well considered, according to my lights, merits serious deliberation.

“ My lights are you. Once already I have tasted of marriage, and it did not very well agree with me. Marriage is a mania with women. They all have it. If you but sigh, they want to put the fatal ring on your finger. Madame can’t abide her husband. She wants to marry me. As for me, I couldn’t live with my wife. I am sweet-tempered. But we came to blows. I meet the Duenna on board ship. She is a divinity. I am fascinated by this divinity. I do not displease her. We are of age, both of us. We have need of leave from no one. And when I begin to conjugate the verb *To Love*, the fair Olympian answers : ‘ Notary, contract, marriage ! ’ Perhaps she’s right. The stern prison of marriage has an opening, or at least a tiny window, leading from it : divorce. Whereas free love—ah, that is the galleys, hard love for life. If only I had married Madame, all would be simple. What joy the goddess would have had in making me unfaithful to her !

“ You say nothing. Your nose wrinkles and grows pointed. I don’t like those dainty little movements of the nostrils. You are unjust to Madame, most unjust. You have known her in her old age. Ah ! Ah, if you had seen her twenty years ago, my friend ! How alluring

she was! Plump, round, blond, like a little Sévigné tobacco jar. And what capacity for enjoyment! She came to the Villa Said every morning, whatever the weather might be—ah! She was a woman of passion; a farsighted woman, too.”

A pause. I hear the bath tap gurgling.

“And then I owe her so much! What was I when she took me up? A timid librarian, a journalist of learning. I was writing articles in *Le Musée des Familles* at fifty francs a piece. I had no decent home. Madame’s is finely furnished, it’s imposing. In our profession the setting means much. Madame gave me luxury. Writers of delicacy like me have need of luxury. Only brutes and low pedants can mock at Seneca for writing his eulogium of Poverty on a desk of gold. The golden desk was indispensable to him. You can only really disdain that which you possess. Without Madame, should I have been elected to the Academy? You will tell me that the Cupola is but a poor halo. Even so, you must put it on, in order to appreciate its inanity. In the autumn of life Madame is peevish, faddy, captious, exacting, jealous. Such is the supreme form of her love. I confess I should prefer friendship. Alas! It is only in novels that you pass from one to the other without storms. Those are not two adjoining states. On the contrary. Love is nearer to hatred than to friendship. Finally, Madame frees me from material things. I can’t tot up a bill, or order a menu, or give a proper tip. Madame excels in all things pertaining to mathematics. She has a genius for organization. I lunch and dine with her. She invites my admirers and lets me invite my friends. The cooking is excellent, the cellar choice, the establishment perfectly run. It runs for me.”

He forgets that he is ill. He leaps to earth, and puts on dressing-gown and slippers.



"To be sure, there is Monsieur. There is the husband. But then there had to be one! And since there had to be one, why, this one's as good as another. Besides, despite his thorny outside Monsieur is very agreeable. He is a reactionary. He is always grumbling. One gets used to it. With me, he is perfectly decent. We squabble all day long, but only about politics. At bottom, we are very fond of one another. In fact, he's fonder of me than of his wife. It's I who compose their quarrels."

He marches, nude, towards the bath. He stands in the midst of the carpet like a statue with his bathrobe over his arm.

"To sum up. Reason tells me: 'Stay with Madame.' Love cries to me: 'Go with the Duenna!' I am dragged both ways. I am not reasonable: I am in love! There's time enough to be reasonable hereafter. I'm sixty-five. And I'm in love like a stripling of twenty! At first I couldn't believe it. I watched myself anxiously. Was I ill? No. The evidence is too strong. My child, I am suffering from the symptoms of the most delicious disorder. You laugh! You have a stone, a mere scrap of marble, under your left breast."

He goes into the dressing-room and soliloquizes amid the splashings of the bath.

"The Duenna is no chicken. In what year did she obtain her brevet? Under the Empire. So much the better. The prejudice against a woman's age is fit for the middle classes or counter-jumpers. Love is a science, the science of sciences. The more you apply yourself to it, the more you excel. The saying 'The innocent have their hands full' is nonsense. The innocent don't know where to put their hands. If they did, would they be innocent?"

He rubs himself. He soaps himself.

"She's an actress. There's a prejudice against the

profession, but we no longer live in the days of Béjart. Actresses are not excommunicated now: they receive honours. They are welcomed everywhere. They almost rule the roost. They pull the strings of the puppets of politics. Really the time has come predicted by Petronius: 'The world has turned actor.'"

Now he is in his bathrobe. He pats himself all over. "The profession of actress, it must be allowed, offers a fair field for the rejuvenation of passion. You're in love with not one woman, but ten, a hundred—Célimène, Rosine, Pauline, Chimène. I have had anonymous letters. There are evil people everywhere. They have sent me a whole catalogue of the Duenna's lovers. She is not a maid! What a fine piece of news! I'm no novice, either. What idiots we should look at our age, if we were! She has had misfortunes, like myself. Like myself, she is in need of tenderness. This meeting on the sea was providential. A new era had dawned for me. Since then this labour of lectures has become an enchantment. Well, say something to me, little wretch! Whatever you say, I shall answer you: 'She redoubles my force.' And that hasn't happened to me for seven years."

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#### THE SACRED GEESE

We visit the Palace of Congress.

"Rome kept geese and undertook nothing without taking the advice of these sacred birds. We too have our sacred geese in Parliament. If you get together a hundred men to ask their advice, no one can be responsible for more than a hundredth of the idea put forward. An assembly may be compared to a head—but a head full of excitement, of mediocre notions, of enthusiasms, of panics, of delirium. All the parliaments of the world united

would never have written *L'Esprit des Lois* or *Le Discours sur la Méthode*. And all the academies of France, those of the Pont des Arts included, however much they scrutinized and cavilled, would not have produced *Phèdre* or *Bérénice*. We commonly say of an assembly that it is 'a body.' Nobody would ever dream of calling it a mind!"

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#### OLD—NEW

"If crafty Fontenelle had opened his fists stuffed with truth, he would have been put in the Bastille or a lunatic asylum. He would have passed for a visionary—nowadays they are called anarchists. Do you want a patent receipt for posing as a bold innovator? Dish up the oldest grievance you can find in the taste of to-day. As Mme. Bertin said once to Queen Marie Antoinette who was asking for novelties: 'Nothing is new except the forgotten.' A true philosopher, that seller of ribbons and bibbons."

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#### THE PRAYER OF THE ORTOLANS

"He was a blessed Capuchin, and he loved game. With which someone reproached him. 'What!' cried he. 'If ortolans, partridges, and pheasants could speak, they would say: O servants of God, eat us! Give us for sepulchre your seraphic gizzards, that our substance, incorporated in yours, may one day rise again with you in glory and not go to hell with the impious!'"

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## THE DODGE OF THE CONCLAVE

To grasp once more the usurped sceptre, the Judge has now taken to the tactics used by the Romans when the cardinals threatened to extend the conclave till kingdom come and the Holy Ghost was backward in nominating a Pope. Every day he lops the meals of one course, till the once abundant fare becomes so scanty that Anatole France stops his flow of anecdotes. As he sips his camomile, he sighs :

“ My children, we ate our jam first. Now comes the powder. Should our host bring us still nearer to the bare cloth, we shall have to come with picnic baskets. There are inns in the suburbs that show a sign : ‘ You may bring your own food,’ and you choose an arbour where to sit with your young lady and your sausage. Shall we come to that ? The terrible part of it is that our host is a sort of pot without a handle : you don’t know where to take hold of him. Amphora, I might say—the image is classic and far from insulting.”

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## THE EMERALD AND THE GRIFFIN

At luncheon the Duenna with a careless movement produces a case, and from the case an emerald of the purest water, cut flat. It is a bargain. Little X, who is in the company, wants to sell the jewel. The poor girl is *dans la mouïse*—stony.

“ Why should one say *être dans la mouïse* ? ” asks Anatole France. “ It is picturesque, but obscure. Should it not rather be *dans le moïse*, that is, in the cradle, like to a childling, tied and helpless. The *moïse* is the basket in which the infant Moses, abandoned, floated on the Nile. It is a subject on which Hugo in his youth wrote some verses unparalleled for silliness :

My sister, the wave is freshest with the first fire of day.  
See! The reaper reposes in his sojourn.

Sojourn! Sojourn! It is the sojourn of the common-place.

The bank is still solitary——

Pooh! Well, that line might be by Chénier.

Memphis barely raises a confused murmur.

Good! It's the moment when rugs are shaken out of window.

And our chaste pleasures, beneath these leafy bowers,  
Have no witnesses but the dawn.

A chaste pleasure is like asses' milk, or wine without alcohol. Lemonade. Water soup——"

The Duenna stops the commentator with a figure.

"The ring cost ten thousand francs in the Rue de la Paix. The poor girl will let it go for three thousand. She's been playing at baccarat and had an awful stinger. In fact she can't pay her hotel bill. The emerald would suit me perfectly!"

"You know, fairest creature, that the emerald is a stone of mystery. Birds named griffins collect them in their nests."

"Griffons—birds? A griffon is a dog, Monsieur France, an English dog, with very stiff hair and a bristly head."

"In ancient times griffins were half eagle, half lion. Now the breed has perished."

"Ah, that's a mercy!"

"Griffins were extremely fond of emeralds, just as magpies still are of sparkling objects. How do we know? Dante tells us so, in the *Purgatorio*. You don't believe Dante! Unhappy young woman, you shall go to Purgatory. Dante offers a fine emerald to



Beatrice. Poets are generous in their verses. Why an emerald? Because this stone, fair charmer, is queen among green stones. Not grass nor any gem is of a brighter shade."

He takes the jewel and descants upon it. The Duenna can hardly contain herself for joy.

"The emerald—witness many men of scientific mind—reflects images like a mirror. It aids oratory. It is efficacious against epilepsy."

"How horrid!"

"It improves the sight."

"I prefer that. I don't see very well close by. But at a distance my sight is like a lynx."

"The emerald restores the memory."

"Capital! I can't remember any of my parts. The prompter says I tire him out."

"The emerald repels phantoms and demons. It calms tempests and stanches wounds."

"And all that for three thousand francs?"

Anatole France, dryly, puts down the ring upon the table:

"Never wear that stone, my dear; I love you too well."

"And why?"

"The emerald calms movements of passion."

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### SKINS

We visit the Botanical Gardens. Chinchilla skins are offered to the Master, who offers them to the Duenna. The same evening she shows her trophies in the green-room. How deliciously soft! What a price they represent! The other actresses almost have a fit, and make bitter-sweet remarks.

"How will you pack all that, dear? In the tropics, the moths will devour them."

"I shall put them in pepper and naphthalene and vetiver."

"Pooh! The moths of these parts eat everything. You will have to order tin-lined boxes."

"I have thought of that already."

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### AWAY WITH RABELAIS

Attendance at the lectures gets daily poorer. Rabelais does not interest the Argentine. Folk say that Anatole France writes divinely, but can't speak. Now Blasco Ibañez knows how to speak. His is a deadly competition for us. He has many strings to his bow, and talks on all manner of subjects—Napoleon, the French Revolution, Marie Antoinette, Berlioz, the Inquisition. We have only Panurge, Picrochole, and Gargantua.

At the last lecture, there was not a soul in the boxes and not one woman in the house. In all, three hundred baldpates. It was funereal. The Master, smiling and short-sighted, and fingering sheaves of notes, explained Francis I's subtle policy to empty stalls and boxes peopled with shades, with a little pause for applause at the end of each paragraph. It might have been the *Collège de France* on a rainy winter day.

At the end, the organizers came to congratulate him: "Admirable! Admirable! Unique! What delicacy! A thought too delicate, perhaps, for our people in the Argentine three thousand kilometres from Paris. They need something wider, more coloured, more sonorous, warmer. You must not forget, dear Master, that we are barbarians."

So they followed him to the Judge's. There, wheedling was abandoned for figures :

" There's no money in the house at all. It's a disaster, a frost. If this goes on, there won't be enough to cover expenses. We must have another subject."

" Another subject ! Do you imagine that I keep a change of subjects in my trunk like socks and drawers ? "

" You must change the subject ! There's only just time. To-morrow shut up Rabelais and don't mention him again."

" But I still have to explain——"

" Explain nothing ! Stow him away. Rabelais doesn't interest the Argentines. They can't stand him. Talk of something that interests them."

" What does interest the Argentines ? "

" The Argentine, to be sure ! "

" Ah ! "

" When you go to talk to people, you must tell them something that gives them pleasure to hear."

" What would give you pleasure to hear ? "

" That we are the first people in the world ! That the future is ours ! That the women of the Argentine are the most beautiful in the world ! That the elegance of the Argentine reflects the pride of Castile ! That we are rich ! "

" And how can I bring all that in ? "

" However you please ! You have been here a month. You have discovered the Argentine. You are dazzled. Tell us so, and we shall be dazzled too."

Rabelais has been shoved away. The operation was easy, for no one knew where we had got to with him. Thursday next there will be a gala matinée on the Argentine and its people. Meanwhile, the other dates will be given to readings. Anatole France will read unpublished stories : *La Chemise*, *Le Miracle de Monsieur*

*Saint-Nicolas*. There will also be a lecture on French contemporary poets, and the actresses of the company will recite.

All afternoon we have worked at the lecture on the Argentine. We have ransacked Baedeker, and geographies, and Jules Huet's books. The harvest is modest. Then the Master has an idea.

"My friend, take *Sur la Pierre Blanche*—the white stone that you so amiably cleaned" (I have corrected the proofs). "There is a passage that satisfies me—me who am never satisfied with what I do—where Gallio foretells the future grandeur of the Christian sect, and the new nations which shall tear her hegemony from Rome. Read the passage to me. It will fit the Argentine like a glove." I read the prophecy aloud. He makes some notes, recasts them, erases, finally approves. "Perfect! If the Argentines are not content with that——!"

We work over the whole passage. At the end he falls silent and bites his pen, lingering over the white stone.

"Do you think these Hurons will pay me? It would be a great bore to pull about St. Paul for nothing."

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#### SERENITY AND THE LITTLE MONKEY

As one does for a naughty child, I pretend to enter into his humour.

"It's a liaison that you feel indispensable? Very well, stick to it. You tell me: 'I have found summer's ardour anew in the autumn of life.' Hurrah for St. Martin who works such miracles! But must you therefore go hunt up the mayor and the notary? You are above contracts and sacraments. To what end quill-

driving and wedding breakfasts? I have heard you say a hundred times, if once:

'To eat and drink and bed together  
Is marriage, whatso'er the weather.

"Why must you break with Madame? (Here I quote his own words.) She is an immense help to you in Paris. The hostess of the Avenue Hoche takes on her shoulders your worldly slavery, contracts with publishers, Academic intrigues, polite table talk, all that proves human patience, and printer's proofs too. 'Love is dead'? What an objection! It's a question, not of love, but of a partnership. She only asks you to preside at her table and in her salon. The hours of midnight are your own. Don't break up such a profitable connexion. All the world has its eyes on you. What, you, the prince of sceptics, take solemn vows of matrimony? You'll say: Yes? Amuse yourself as much as you please with little monkeys. But go easy."

Now why do I use the word *guenuche*—little monkey? The Duenna inspires me neither with aversion nor with friendship. Indeed I can hardly say how indifferent I feel towards her. So gilded and coloured is she, that she produces on me the effect of a mummy in the Guimet museum. But I know Anatole France. He is more sensitive to rare substances than to solid argument. The word *guenuche* has struck a chord in his memory. Without *guenuche* my litany would have been lost in the void. The grammatical trap has been sprung and the antiquarian lover is taken. He repeats with a broad smile:

"*Guenuche*! *Guenuche* is more appetizing than *guenon*. *Guenuche* is in Mathurin Régnier and in Saint Simon. The Princess Palatine called Mme. de Maintenon 'old *guenuche*.' She ate *sauerkraut* but she knew French well. *Guenuche* is the most elegant of insults, an arabesque



almost, that evokes the monkey tricks of eighteenth-century painters."

He is off at a tangent.

"The real little old monkey was the Princess Palatine. What a leech! She could not forgive the Widow Scarron for sharing the Sun King's bed. Mme. de Maintenon had beauty in her autumn. Cold, maybe, or so they say. But you know, behind the curtain, these dragons of virtue sometimes purr like tigresses. While giddy little things, who are all over you in a second, almost faint after the merest skirmish. What was it Louis XIV, who was as stout a fellow as you or I, my friend—and eminently Bourbon in that particular—what did he call Mme. de Maintenon? He said: 'You are my serenity.' Alas, serenity goes one better than little monkey. The Duenna is my serenity, which Providence has made to flower on my dusty way. Yesterday in her dressing-room I recited to her Assuérus' lines to Esther:

'I find in all I know not what grace  
That charms me always nor never wearies me.'

She had played the part of Basilide in Coppée's *Pour la Couronne* divinely. *Pour la Couronne* is not such a stupid play as I had believed. It has situations worthy of Corneille and speeches quite like Hugo. Too much like, for my taste. *Pour la Couronne* is not stupider than *Horace* or *Hernani*, and is just as inhuman. Inhumanity in life is punished at the assizes. On the stage it is applauded; it becomes stoic and moral. Marry your father's murderer and the neighbours will fall foul of you. Kill the author of your days for having the bad taste to fall in love with your mistress. You may shout as much as you please:

'Stars, I have killed my father, judge me!'

It won't be the stars, but twelve stolid jurymen who will send you to the hulks.

"In *Pour la Couronne* the Duenna has a sublimely absurd part, that she plays with warmth and native good feeling. She has made rare progress. It's love who is the supreme teacher. For she loves me, my child! It will out, it can't be hid. An inner fire transfigures and rejuvenates her. She is clever with her dresses. Poor child, she's not rich. In times gone by it seems she had jewels to burn, the offerings of admirers. But now they've all gone to my uncle. And here the least scrap of tinsel costs a fortune. Well, she has conquered her indigence by her intelligence. For the part of the perfidious Byzantine queen she wore a sort of turban, of truly oriental grace. I said to her :

" ' Doubtless you have copied some Persian miniature. But where did you get that fringed head-dress that lends such sensuousness to your brow ? ' "

" She answered :

" ' It's the cord of a curtain from the hotel. I took it back there after the performance. ' "

" Ah, my child, Cupid has mighty magic ! Out of an ancient Louis-Philippe curtain cord he had made a diadem of glory. "

There is a knock at the door. It is a bill for scent, soap, rouge and powder, addressed to Mme. Anatole France. The Master says dryly :

" There is no Mme. Anatole France. And for long to come there will be none. "

He drops the word "serenity" and resumes *guenuche*, on which he rings the changes.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### CAMPO SANTO

My favourite walk now is to the cemetery. The realm of the sepulchres is not far removed from our own.

There is the same rectilinear monotony, the same white-wash, the same pretension. The city on a Lilliputian scale.

Here is the rich district, with its stucco maisonnettes, its villas, churchy or infantile. Here is the middle-class quarter, with its little gardens. And here the populous quarter, where the dead rot in common as they have lived. In the aristocratic section the chapels sometimes have a grating like that of a hot-air system in a house. But here the grating exhales a sickening breath. Sometimes on the roof is a ventilator to dissipate the stench. If you look in you see the biers, sign of the true Spanish taste prevailing here for making a show of death. Simple folk occupy pigeonholes, ranged in three and four stories, with a little window for each coffin. Where is it better to rot, above or below? Precarious bricks seal the funereal garret. The bricks get detached and here, in a mouldy hole as of a decayed tooth, grins a skull lying on a puzzle of shining bones.

Your middle class loves statuary. The defunct are hoisted up on their tombs like ornaments upon clocks. Sculptured after the taste of the Italians, they wear marble furcoats and marble top-hats and marble boots, each one showing the tools of his trade, or caressing his favourite dog, cat, or child. Or they lean upon marble night tables, and on the tables are books and medicine bottles and crucifixes and testaments of marble. The women are elegant in marble: their feathered hats, shawls, muffs and furs in sugary carrara can never melt, but remain eternally sweet and sickly under the rain.

Around the necropolis is a network of waste land, those vague unformed quarters, that band of fifth and rubbish, the refuse of factories and savage hutments that oppress the suburbs of all cities. People live here, far less at their ease than the dead. They are the emigrants.

They dig themselves into this gluttonous earth that eats the corpses so quick and gives them back in monotonous grass. It is land without stone, made of mud deposited by the river, where the least weed blossoms, a sticky, shifting marl that hangs about your feet, ground of precious and uncertain qualities.

The other evening, an organ-grinder came to play near the cemetery. From out of his box flowed, though somewhat damaged, the trills and gurgles of some opera of Verdi's, the *Traviata*, I think. It was like a tocsin. From the midst of those wretched hovels and huts, from the grass itself, sprang suddenly a multitude of children, almost naked, who arranged themselves by the light of nature into a quadrille and set to dance, boys and girls, in the space round the organ with an incredible dash and mastery. Infants of six danced on the points of their toes, and flirted their rags, tucking dirty shifts up to their monstrous little bellies. Their poise of head was that of the prima ballerina. Opposite them danced the boys, clacking invisible castanets with their filthy hands and playing on imaginary tambourines. The childish ballet lasted late into the night, but, without me, the organ-grinder would not have got a copper.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### DEPARTURE

We leave Buenos Ayres to-morrow morning and embark at break of day for Uruguay. There will be lectures at Montevideo, and performances; for the theatrical company and Anatole France and Rabelais are now as one. Then on to Rio de Janeiro, and further.

At dinner, he is full of plans:

"We shall do this, and we shall do that. We will correct the lectures. We must profit by experience: at

Buenos Ayres they were too didactic and above the audience's head. One must go carefully with these youthful peoples and play with them as with children. They don't want scholarship, but chatter. On the boat, my friend, you will be so kind as to go through the manuscript. Cut out whatever seems needless to you with a pitiless pencil. And then add a few dramatic touches of your own. Paint a picture of the reign of François I, with a contrast between the Huguenots grilling at the stake and the Italian fêtes at Court. You know, a scrap or two of Tréboulet and of Mme. d'Etampes. Yes, yes! And Victor Hugo goes well here."

The sluice-gates of plans are wide open till midnight, finishing with instructions as to the boxes:

"Let nothing of your own little luggage go astray, my child. Let us be sure each of his provision and his purse. Mademoiselle will kindly take charge of my manuscripts together with her theatrical dresses, sceptre, crown. I shall leave with my hands in my pockets."

At dawn we are awakened by our host. Is he afraid that we shall miss the boat? His rôle of host weighs visibly on him. We drain the last cup of coffee in a strained atmosphere of colds and sleepiness. The ceremony of adieux takes place in the dining-room, in the nasty, equivocal light of struggling day. I think of Fontainebleau. All the servants' hall is there, in expectation of tips; but there will be better still—cordial handshakes and warm congratulations. For the hospitable Judge, a deluge of monosyllables, stammers, endearments, snufflings and eyes streaming, in the midst of which he receives the scroll of the lectures:

"Keep it, my dear host. It is yours. Where could Rabelais be more at home than with the humanist of the New World who—which—what—where——"

Journalists are already hanging round our luggage.



The Duenna appears in the motor-car, her head swathed in thick veils. She has already taken a cachet. She is dying. He, on the other hand, shines and glitters from a thousand ironical dimples. Tints of peach and lemon are in his nostrils, his cheeks, the corners of the eyes, in the silver of his beard. He chatters like a chaffinch.

"It is high time to quit this town without a past. Have you been happy here, my queen? For me Buenos Ayres is you! When I am asked later: 'What is Buenos Ayres like? You have been there?' I shall answer: 'Buenos Ayres has the shape of a goddess, divinely fair, sweet to see by evening, and sweet to see by morn.'"

The Duenna complains of the motor-car: she must have this window open and that shut. She doesn't know if she will be able to get as far as the boat, she feels so unwell. There has been malicious talk in the company: they have talked ill of her! Of her, who is so good! But there are things she can't forgive. What nasty minds some people have! And she prints little crimson O's on her cambric handkerchief.

Here we are at the dock. François, who had been beside the driver, springs to earth and carries off the Master's hand luggage, then with deliberate step gains the ship. The Duenna follows him beturbaned in impenetrable veils. As I prepare to cross the gang-plank, the Master embraces me, literally drowns me in his beard, and hurls me back with my poor bag on to the quay:

"My child," he says, in Punch-like tones, "you leave us here. Yes, yes, better so. Better so. We will meet again in France."

A change of tone. The mocking voice becomes bitter:

"Madame has told me all. Yes, all, all. You have been lacking in good feeling, young man. I shall forget, I shall forget it—but in Europe."

He holds out an envelope and shoves me back :

“ There ! Take that ! In Europe ! ”

Light and victorious as Atalanta, he bounds on to the vessel. I remain stupidly sitting on my portmanteau, as people do in tragedies. The siren shrieks. The engines belch forth their cottonwool. The ship ploughs the uncertain waves.

I open the envelope. It contains a ticket home, and a card of Anatole France to the captain of the *Magellan*, a French boat, asking that a good cabin may be allotted to his secretary whose health is delicate.

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#### FRUITLESS BEAUTY

We had all noticed the little Brazilian girl, raggedest and most radiant of all the swarming humanity parked forward with the sheep and oxen and chickens. She had little but a shift, not overclean, its hem torn into a fringe, and through the vents in it glistened her young flesh in its robe of sumptuous beauty. Her lips and eyes have a sweetness that imperiously abolishes distinctions of class. The privileged passengers of the upper deck have been in the habit of extracting this saffron floweret from the emigrant dungheap, to illuminate their own anæmic games.

One of the officers discovered her the other day going the rounds in his wake. It was easy enough for her : the minute piece of Brazilian humanity danced along barefoot.

“ What are you doing there, you thing of the wilds ? ”

The beggar maid swept her magnificent eyes over him, got a tap on the cheek, and, thenceforward, licence to skip from one class to another.

We used to keep titbits from our dessert for her and delight in seeing her crack a nutshell in her teeth without an effort. Some would naughtily put a cigarette to her lips or a glass in which trembled the last drop of liqueur. She revelled in sweets, alcohol, caresses and smoke, and let herself be tamed by them. Indeed, gossip had it that she began to stay late in certain bachelor cabins.

One evening she did not turn up for her usual treat. The barman, asked about her, replies in the same voice in which he takes orders for cocktails, across a flower-bed of multicoloured glasses spiky with straws :

"That poor little Brazilian emigrant? She's in a bad way. She was running along the deck like a mad thing, when she fell through a half-open trap into the coalhold. They got her out senseless. She's up on the deck there, if you want to see. It's not pretty. The doctor's doing all he can to bring her round, but it's no go. She's in for it. It was bound to happen. A regular baggage, jumping all over the place, whether it was allowed or not, and no matter if anyone forbade her. Her father and mother took no heed. Children should be taken better care of."

The poor little girl had been placed in a long deck-chair, a clammy thread of blood like thin silk trickling from the nostrils over the resplendent teeth, her head rolling gently in the doctor's hand, her brown cheek already pale with the kiss of the silent goddess. The cord gathering in the neck of the rough chemise had been cut, and a firm, golden breast, already ripening, showed, like the burning close-pulped September peaches among the vines in my Languedoc.

In vain, all the doctor's efforts. In vain, the display of fruitless beauty. In vain, water and ether poured over the adorable broken doll. The little passenger

had made the great passage. The child emigrant had found a country.

The father and mother, being fetched, emit inharmonious howls. Then the captain has an idea to stifle a discord offensive to virginal tragedy and voluptuous night. He throws a coin into his cap and passes it round. Everyone adds his mite and, the collection made, the captain empties the hat into the apron of the mother, who stills her sobs to reckon up the total, while at her side her man consoledly watches the process of addition, wipes his eyes, and pockets the result.

On the threshold of night, before we dine and dance, the little body will be thrown to waves already heavy with sleep, wrapped in its canvas shroud. Someone has sewn a feeble wreath in green and rose on the sack. Two missionaries who are on board take place on either side of the body, lying on a plank, and murmur prayers from their breviary, by the light of a candle that a boy holds aloft. The uneasy flame flickers between his fingers. We are all on deck, passengers of all classes, and officers, and sailors, and galley boys, the captain, rough, jolly fellow, presiding: all in one class—that of mortals. The priests and their Latin seem unable to come to an end, and we long for a good roll that would let us resume conversation, pipes, and cigarettes. Now one of the priests sprinkles the whitey sack with some twigs dipped in a saucer. He purifies the air with the sign of the cross; then with a lift of his shoulders puts on his biretta again. As good as to say: “The rites are accomplished. Quite enough for a third-class passenger. Let us go and dine.”

On a sign from the captain two sailors take up the little body and throw it over the bulwarks, as one might get rid of a mattress full of vermin. The sharks leap up, playing with the package of death before tearing it

to pieces. But the wreath swims long, like some phosphorescent illusion, in our wake.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### EXAMEN DE CONSCIENCE

Why did I follow the great man to the other end of the world? Was I useful to him? And what did he promise me? What innocence, to put one's trust in the prince of sceptics! In seven long years that I have lived through in his company, had I not fathomed the depths of that illustrious hypercritic? Was he a good son? A loving father? An agreeable husband? A discreet lover? An easy master? A generous citizen?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### THE WIFE

"Marriage is the most terrible of sacraments. Why did I let myself be tied to that harpy, who would have given points to Xantippe? She was noisy. She was common. They persuaded me I loved her: it was easy, for I knew nothing about love. They taught me to write, they taught me the catechism, Latin, and the four rules, but no one taught me love. The true reason is that I married to have a home of my own and be master in it—to get away from maternal leading-strings. My bride owned a house on the outskirts of Blois. I realize now, it was the house I loved. Such bourgeois idylls are common enough. To have peace and the joy of knocking nails in my own wall in my own house, I gave her a child.



"How she squandered money! For long I had my eye on a mediæval angel in wood, an angel in adoration, who purred, all fresh and curled, in the window of a dealer in the Rue Tournon. As I left the Senate, where I was librarian, I used to look at it with envy. I asked the price. The fair, winged youth, who doubtless was of Italian workmanship, cost two hundred francs. Two hundred francs, my friend, was no small sum in those days.

"By force of economy and privations, and laboured articles, and stories placed here and there, and sweated prefaces for new editions, I collected a little treasure. I paid my wife her month's money—five hundred francs, made over every month like clockwork—and went to sleep with the pleasant prospect of beginning the morrow with the purchase of my little angel. In the morning, alas! the hag flew out at me: the banknote, she pretended, that I had given her, was for fifty francs, not five hundred, so that I still owed her four hundred and fifty. Was ever such impudence! My lovely angel had flown away at the moment my hand was about to grasp him. I was gentle, my friend. When folk cry out, I frown. We were at table, having lunch. This time the limit was overstepped. There was a decanter on the table. I seized it and hurled it at Madame France's head."

He catches himself up, and in the air makes with his hand one of his invisible and perpetual scratches.

"Right across her sulky face!"

\* \* \* \* \*

#### *HIS DAUGHTER*

"In what is she my daughter? She resembles me physically, but morally she is as foreign to me as if she

had been born at Mukden or Tokio. She has never read a line of one of my books. A good thing too. Whenever she comes to see me it is to ask me for money. I married her to Captain M——. She left him. Naturally, I took sides with the captain. An excellent fellow, that soldier, careful, punctual, and—how could he manage it?—never a grain of dust or a stain on him. His boots were like a mirror. After my daughter's desertion, I owed him some compensation. He had been mixed up in the famous affair of the '*fiches*,' had lost his job, and was looking for another. I had half a mind to offer him the place of valet with me, but I was told it would be contrary to usage. Finally B——, the Minister, got me out of the hole by getting him a place in the colonies. I fairly showered autographs on his Excellency."

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#### THE DISCREET LOVER

In the Louis XIII bedroom, between the mantelpiece made of an altar screen, and the twisted four-post bed, is a Venetian cabinet of horn and ivory with endless drawers in it.

On neuralgic mornings he empties out the best of them into his dressing-gown and fatuously breathes in the scent of pale letters and dried flowers. He displays the photographs fanwise like a hand of cards, scouring his brain for precise reminiscences. What pleasure does he find in these exhumations? He names the heroines. This impudent beauty, radiant as Venus stepping from the wave, is Princess P——. She made some noise in the flower of her age: now she's all for good works. She gives to God and the orphans what men no longer want.

This one, with the large hips, dressed as a Neapolitan fisherman, and casting a line across an operatic balustrade, is so and so. And so on, and so forth.

“Here’s a delicious little phiz, my child, as dark as a truffle. She was a miracle of love and discretion! Most unsuitably linked to a political oaf. She used to come, as regular as clockwork, very early, every Wednesday morning, with nothing on but a peignoir under her fur cloak! She would tell her mother: ‘I am going to the baths.’ Nor did she lie, the charmer. She was going to plunge into the bath of delight.

“The tiresome part of these idylls with ladies of good breeding is the quarter of an hour after. How are you to make up the reckoning? With your professional there is the trade union tariff, and the tip. But with princesses, and their over-nice scruples, fierce virtues, and high-class modesties, how are you to estimate the price of the fall? My little phiz here, as dark and tasty as a truffle, was discretion itself. Punctual and yet all flame. Generous too and not costly. What she had to give, she gave in abundance. And so easy to even up with! It was a joy paid for with any little trifle—a Japanese dagger, to serve as a paper-knife, or a copy of a book on fine paper with an autograph dedication, or a not first-rate print.

“Then there are the theatre ladies who are always theatrical. You promise them a part, and they play love.

“There are also the intellectuals who give themselves to the author, without knowing him, on reading his books. One fine day, after having written a hundred letters, they leave their town or village and hang on to the bell at your front door, where they will die of hunger rather than leave without grasping their happiness. Don’t

laugh ! Two such creatures killed themselves for me. You're astounded ? Aha ! There's literary fame for you. Women who kill themselves are a bore. I don't ask them to die, but only to faint in my arms.

" Look here. This was my trimestrial mistress. Her husband occupies a high administrative position in a department in the centre of France. He's a booby, and she a model of all wifely virtues. She came to Paris every three months to push her husband. She spent three days in the capital. The first was reserved for C——, the second for B——, the third for me. C—— roared like a tiger, scratched and beat her, and howled with oaths : ' Your husband's as empty as a drum ! ' But he ended by softening and gave the ' drum ' a step up. To the lady, a drawing by Rodin or a Japanese print.

" B—— was generous as a good republican should be, and bestowed on the worthy spouse a bust of Gambetta or of the Republic in Sèvres china. I ? I gave her jewels. The last time, it was a cross—an old-fashioned peasant cross, you know, made with Rhine stones. Not ruinous, and so pretty and archaic. A cross looks well, hung between two breasts. My Armida was rather vain of the jewel, and wore it at I know not what ceremony or other. The local reporter wrote : ' We noticed on Madame X——'s neck a magnificent antique cross, a family jewel ! ' Family jewel indeed ! The little rascal sent me the article underlined in blue pencil. After all, how are families founded ?

\* \* \* \* \*

*A GOOD MASTER*

Does he want something of you, he abounds in cajoleries. You are his hope, his honour, the half of his soul. He insinuates himself into your work, confounding his leisure with your industry. While you grind away, he showers posies on you, stimulates you, spreads a string of salacious anecdotes under your nostrils.

"Courage, generous child," he whines.

You work in the midst of an affectionate breath. A fair wind fills the sails, and you skim gaily through the most learned and obscure passages.

After the search is over, the situation changes. To everyone his own troubles. With a fillip, he puts you back in your place, below the salt.

"I had thought you far more ingenious, my friend. You should really look out for some sinecure in a Government office. You lack gumption for literary work."

Vice and virtue in his eyes? All is a question of the point of view. There are agreeable vices and odious virtues, vices profitable and virtues onerous. Does it depend on us to be good or bad? We are what we must be. Do we choose our parents, ancestors, country, or gods? God, Honour, Country are uterine phenomena. Some places are good, others bad; and they are assigned to us before our birth, from all eternity. That is what theologians call "grace," and horse-dealers and genealogists "blood." We can change nothing in it. It is as absurd to be proud of virtue as of one's height or voice, or the colour of one's hair or eyes. These are mere accidents, on which we are without influence.

Why declaim against vices? Traseas is right. He



who hates vices hates men. Man is the most vicious of animals, that is, the most intelligent. Virtue for the most part is only a form of impotence or anæmia. Disinterestedness does not exist. There is no such thing as pure love. Keep chaste folk at a distance as you would the fire: they are fanatics. Virtuous people are visionaries and old women. Life is only possible with those whose senses are appeased. A man or a woman without vices is a jug without a handle: you can't catch hold of them without breaking them.

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#### A GOOD CITIZEN

Yes, a good citizen of Rome or Athens. Is even that sure?

"All we see of antique life is the grace of its stage setting. We wax sentimental over the charming show, as in our own religious festivals. Venus, the madonna, is unveiled. Unveiled too are the children of Marie, crowned with roses, laden with garlands. Unveiled are the choir-boys who swing the censers. And all these nudities shine like Spring in the light of Athens and Rome. It is comic-opera theology tricked out with the elegances of the eighteenth century. Yes, but the cup of Socrates! The rites must be accomplished. Divinities are all the more jealous when they are local. Religion is the city's breath. Take care not to smile or to speak ill of the Olympians who jump over their Elysian walls and come to earth for a spree, like Courteline's recruits. Athens called her philosophers impious. Life was encumbered with festivals and practices. I forget what

Athenian barely escaped the hemlock for having by inadvertence torn up an ancient olive-tree root dedicated to Minerva. These gods, so radiant in the Louvre, these goddesses whose rich and polished bodies fill us with such human warmth, were drunk with blood. I do not speak of the blood of heifers, goats, and doves—but of human blood. The martyrology of paganism almost equals in horror that of the Holy Inquisition. Everywhere, in every age, priests have been cruel beasts. An honest man can only live on good terms with gods that have been overthrown.

“What is the best form of government? The question is wrongly put. It is not one of theory, but of practice. Under what government is it best to live? I mean for the *élite*, for the few privileged brains that incarnate an epoch. The rest, the commonalty, suffer and die without even a glimpse of life. Despotism? Monarchy? Democracy too is a form of tyranny. Where everyone governs, everyone is a slave. Who can call himself free in a country where nobody obeys? Progress? Which sort? That of morals, or that of industry?

“Humanity is like a sea which eats upon one bank what it uncovers on the other. What one gains materially, one loses spiritually. For instance: steam and electricity shorten and lighten toil, reduce distance, spare sweat and suffering. Yes, but they also diminish endurance and stoicism. Man gains, but humanity does not. For persons of good position and for humanists the monarchical system had advantages. To whom must men of letters and artists address themselves? To the *élite*, to be sure. Can you imagine Pheidias being forced to submit his designs for the Parthenon to universal suffrage?

“Racine worked for Louis XIV, that is, for the *élite*

of France and of Europe. If he were still in the world, he would have to pay court to the reading committee of the *Théâtre français*. He would have a fine time, poor Jean! It was not that the Sun-King knew Greek, or Latin, or even French properly. But he was born in a palace, dowered with every possible thing. His eyes opened upon paintings, arabesques, or tapestries; he breathed in, with the air of day, beauty, independence and nobility. He was not servile. Our Presidents of the Republic, and Ministers, and heads of our Universities discover frescoes, Gobelins, Aubusson tapestry and Sèvres china when they are sixty. It is like passing nuts to the toothless. I have seen these democratic potentates, poor wretches. They sleep in the trappings of Louis XIV or the Well Beloved, and shave before Marie Antoinette's mirror. They are intruders, who scarce dare to tread on Savonnerie carpets and have contracted the disease of ugliness in the cradle, where their puerile brains received a lasting stamp from fly stains and the pattern of the upholstery. They are impure. Hence their infallible taste for ugliness and mediocrity. And it will be worse still when our old towns have been Americanized, and immense stores replace the dignity of shops. Happily, my child, we shall be here no longer.

"Socialism? A mystic gospel, fair on paper, fair and comfortable. But in practice! Ha! social equality! And what about corporeal equality? Why did my friend P——, who was my age, and was not specially gifted with brains, snatch all the fairest creatures from me, when we were twenty? Yet he was a republican and a bit of an anarchist to boot. Why do you drink wine, and I camomile? So much for your equality of flies and gizzards, let alone brains!

"The equality to which democracy pushes as to its ideal, would be that all Frenchmen should be struck by

the million like coins and be interchangeable, so that they would fit into any slot and any pile. If we were logical, Academicians would be chosen by universal suffrage. And the electoral urn ought to be the instrument of presenting students of eighteen or twenty with their degrees. You laugh? We haven't reached that point yet, but we will. It's only logic.

"Our republic, born of a monarchist father and a clerical mother, is a poor scrofulous thing. Marianne is far less bold than the Kaiser in social reform. Why do you nod your head like a mandarin? The German workman is far happier than the French. Better paid, better protected, better defended. It's easy to understand why. There, the Emperor is the arbiter between parties and holds the balance. When he considers necessary to tilt it a degree towards the left, he turns to the squires and great manufacturers and says to them plainly and dryly: 'Will you yield a few points or lose everything? Concessions or a revolution?'

"Do you know by whom the only efficacious laws in France that protect workmen—the right to strike, for example—were passed? By the Republic? No, by Napoleon III!

"After the age of sixty you must be either in power or in opposition. Flee from the moderate parties, the centre, stomach of the political organism. Old men's prudence is only made of imprudence.

"Everyone here calls himself republican. The effect of appetite.

"We shall be monarchists to eternity. Behind us we have eighteen centuries of royalty and forty years of republic. Your Frenchman has a horror of liberty. Never confuse liberty with libertinage. Fashion and opinion reign here. You constantly hear the words: 'Such a thing is done, or not done.' We are at once

disciplined and disrespectful. As in the time of Mazarin, we make up songs, and we pay. State alarums always end by Stock Exchange panics. When our revolutionaries get into power the first word they pronounce is : Order. When the Communards invaded the ministries, they rolled up the carpets. Two institutions have aggravated the monarchical spirit : college and the barracks. What civic independence, pray, can persist in a man who has been an exemplary student and a first-class soldier ? He has acquired the habit of marching by twos, or by fours, behind the leader of a file or a banner. Alone, he is lost, and only recovers his courage in public crowds.

“ When he gets home, the revolutionary who has just let loose disorder, humbly apologizes to his wife for having broken his umbrella or left his sleeve in the hands of a policeman. Their brat leads his wife by the nose, and she leads him, and he imagines that he leads the affairs of the country. Why, the affairs of the country run by themselves, with no more guide than people’s stomachs and appendices !

“ Equality ! Think of the ordinary insults in Paris. There is a collision and at once : ‘ Peasant ! Pauper ! Beggar ! Ruined swell ! ’ True, there are more human and more picturesque expressions. I once heard an endearment worthy to have issued from the wisdom of a member of the *Académie des Belles Lettres* : ‘ Provincial cuckold ! ’ Now what was its signification ? Are the horns of cuckoldom lighter and slenderer in Paris ? I reflected much on it. The Parisian feels there is less dishonour when they are planted in Paris and by a citizen of Paris. And the rest of France is at one with him. Your Norman despises the Picard. To the Lyonnais a Marseillais’ boasting is intolerable. Languedoc maligns Gascony. The Basque mistrusts the Béarnais. That’s



what we call national unity ! A lovely bouquet, truly—a bouquet of thistles.

“ Equality ! Nowhere else can such a craving to serve be found. Are you an archbishop, actress, or fashionable coquette, you will always find someone to carry your train. No one wants to stay in his own state. Sunday is an insupportable day. Everyone tricks himself out, and dresses up as if for a masquerade. Husband, citizen, citizeness, and brats form a terrible and ridiculous chain on the pavement, that recalls the chariots, armed with scythes, of the Gospel, and forces the isolated bachelor to beat a quick retreat.

“ On days of national holiday Paris belongs to drunkards. Have you ever noticed the joy of third-class passengers in first-class railway carriages ? They fall on the cushioned seats with the enthusiasm of fanatics of the Faubourg Antoine overthrowing the Bastille. Equality for them is the first class.

“ And as for decorations ! A revolutionary who does not become minister is an imbecile. The Communards who were not shot and didn’t die of fever at Cayenne are to-day governors of prisons or insane asylums. Revolution is a career just like science or a Government office. Step by step you gain your pension. During the Dreyfus case, I was struck by the importance of committees. Everyone of them beribboned itself, as with a streamer, in the name of equality. They could never have enough officials—presidents, vice-presidents, secretaries, treasurers and what not. They talked of revolts and barricades, but before marching on the Elysée gave notice to the police.

“ What a noble people is ours ! It never makes revolts in winter. Haven’t you noticed that ? All the great revolutionary days are in July, August, and September. When it rains, they go home taking their flags with them.

They will die for the Idea, but they won't catch cold for it. Vigny remarked that in *Stello*: 'When it rained on the 9th of Thermidor, the Robespierrists, Henriot, and his artillery had the best of it.' What think you of these Jacobins at the mercy of the barometer? Frogs, who cry for a king!"

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### FRATERNITY

"Fraternity? Oh, the beautiful revolutionary inscription! Liberty, equality, and fraternity, or death! Embrace me, love me, or I shall kill you!"

\* \* \* \* \*

### A GOOD FRIEND

"You have done nothing but desert him: of course—he was your oldest friend."

And again:

"Ah, what a calamity, these old friends! The older they are, the more poisonous they become. They are like shellfish that stick to the hull of a ship, and eat it and weigh it down. You call that affection? Just try to swallow a shellfish like that; it will kill you.

"My friends? There are no more friends, as someone or other said. What, after all, is a friend? An importunate fellow who takes advantage of your weakness, installs himself in your house, mixes his affairs up with yours, upsets your habits, wastes your time, tells you disagreeable truths, takes note pitilessly of all your wrinkles and your failings, and proclaims to the world at

large that you are finished, that you are dotty, that you need leading-strings—and that he adores you.”

\* \* \* \* \*

### LITERATURE

“Not a passable phrase has been written since the French Revolution.

“Good taste and good sense were guillotined in the Place de la Concorde. The Duchesse de Maine’s least chambermaid talked better, more naturally, and more brilliantly than our most polished blue-stockings. Mme. de Sévigné’s contemporaries would easily have the best of all our holy academies, yes, I repeat, on every question. Encyclopædias, dictionaries, and manuals have vulgarized the sciences. Could a more insulting expression be found?

“Gobelin tapestries used to patch one’s breeches!

“Masterpieces and geniuses don’t exist by themselves. But when peoples are greedy for genius and masterpieces, they quickly make them with whatever materials come handy.

“Good style? Since everything has been subverted and the rabble invaded things of the mind, style is changed every twenty years and what was blessed is cursed.

“The Romantics? What an art! The triumph of Mascarille and of Jocrisse. The twilight of taste. *Of love make me die, fair marquise, your fair eyes!*

“The ill comes from the lack of judges. Formerly men wrote for persons of taste, that is, for a very small public. To-day the best, the most glorious author is he who has the largest sale and makes the most money. The criterion of success and genius is the pile of your books on sale.

"You know, I have the largest pile under the arcades of the *Odéon*!"

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### BACK FROM THE NEW WORLD

Anatole France has at last returned to France by the very longest route possible. I hear of it through friends. He had published far and wide that he was taking an Italian boat and would land at Naples, hoping thus to put Madame off the scent. But François cabled the exact itinerary to Madame and she was there, on the platform at the St. Lazare station, like Nemesis.

When he saw her armed with parasol and lorgnette, and dressed like a girl going to her first Communion, the poor great man was changed to a pillar of salt. He hunched himself up on his seat in the carriage, deaf to the Duenna and the porters' supplications: "We are at the terminus. Everyone must get out," not daring to look out of the window where Remorse in ribbons kept guard. They pushed him out like a portmanteau. Then suddenly the courage of the shy came to him: he took the Duenna's arm, and with military step passed in front of Madame, cutting her dead. The poor old thing nearly died of it on the spot.

The papers are full of details concerning the Academician's impending marriage. Nevertheless, a friend of mine who is also a friend of Madame's does not despair of a catastrophe that may yet change the tragedy into a farce.

Through Josephine, Madame is kept informed of the storms at the Villa Said. For storms there are. The Duenna has attempted to make a revolution in the furniture. She wants chairs, large and small, on which

to sit. She has a passion for little cushions. She can't abide the great four-poster with its canopy as if to house the Holy Sacrament. She has exiled a dozen virgins and saints to the loft. M. Bergeret is stupefied and regrets Madame.

Things go from bad to worse. Of an evening, the Duenna is bored in the museum-like surroundings of the Villa Said. She says the worm-eaten quivering relics give her the nightmare and make her feel as if she were in a chapel or a cemetery. To still her tremors, she takes the Master after dinner to a friend's, where they play *grabuge*—a game of cards that, I fancy, requires three or four players and much patience and attention. M. Bergeret refuses to play *grabuge* with either attention or patience. In vain they beg him to hold his cards properly and not to show all his trumps. Instead of following suit, he tells stories. The Duenna and the sceptic begin to tire of one another.

Madame, from the Avenue Hoche, has her finger in the pie of the Villa Said, and bribes Josephine to make trouble of all sorts.

"What is this for, Josephine?" says the Master.

"Mademoiselle wants it so," or "Mademoiselle has forbidden it."

"Ah, my poor Josephine, we were happier in Madame's time."

Josephine leaps at the sign for which she has been watching.

"Ah yes, poor Monsieur France. This one will drive you to an early grave. She's a misery, I tell you. Where did you ever pick her up? She talks to me like a dog, and don't treat you better, sir. She's a regular gendarme. Ever since she's been here no one can eat or drink or sleep!"



"Josephine? How if I went back to Madame? But she'd kill me!"

"No, sir, that she wouldn't. People say things like that but don't do 'em. Of course she'll shriek a bit; but you're accustomed to that. You'll shriek, too. And you'll cry. And the one who shrieks the most will come off best."

\* \* \* \* \*

### RECONCILIATION AND ARCHÆOLOGY

So it has come about that one morning Josephine has pushed M. Bergeret, mourning his relics, into a cab.

"Driver! Avenue Hoche.—Madame, I've brought him back to you."

The mending has been done and the cracks are not too visible. Madame has been full of tact. There have been no allusions to *Histoire Comique*. She has carried her old friend off to the antique dealer's and the print-seller's and the bookshop, and the heart of the connoisseur has overflowed. Think of it! Since the flowery month of May his sensuous finger has not felt marbled calf or poked under the covering of a single chalice.

He has gone home laden with virgins and engravings. And to-morrow they will set off on a delicious archæological voyage. It will be a honeymoon of the castles and museums on the Loire. They will get drunk on antiques.

When the Duenna returned from her friend's, where she had passed the night after *grabuge*, Josephine answered her from the window. You can imagine the trumpet-tones of her voice:

"Monsieur France has gone off on a ship with Madame.

When will they be back? How should I know? In a year or two. They're going round the world."

\* \* \* \* \*

#### AT THE CHAPON FIN

According to custom, we lunch at the Chapon Fin, where our South Americans wish to taste the wines that are the envy of all Europe. As we finish the *hors-d'œuvre*, an old man comes into the room, flanked by two women. My back being to the door, I do not see him, but I catch the nasal drawl of an anecdote. It is Anatole France.

The Master and his two companions take their seats at the other end of the room. Madame to the right of him, Madame's maid to the left of him.

The adventure of Buenos Ayres has not aged him. He began early to coquet with the part of G ron te, so now time adds but a gracious patina. His tint of cheek is more ivory, his beard more ample, more silvery, more impudent, the moustaches, as always, military. A mixture of patriarch, tramp, and zouave. He talks. He talks ceaselessly, with gestures, poses, and winks. But his companions pay no more attention to what he says, nor to his liberties, reticences, or the elaborate style, than to the dripping of a tap. All his points and paradoxes that ravished Madame's salon in the Avenue Hoche before the idyll of the Argentine, here fall like monotonous rain on ears of marble. They are like two governesses watching an infant. Lest he should stain his clothes, they knot a napkin, bib-like, round his neck. He is on a diet. The Immortal must take the dish set before him and has his wine watered. Forbidden morsels are removed from his plate. He mumbles some erotic tale culled, I guess, from Casanova, or Brant me, over a leg of chicken. The

Master lacks "go." The drum-stick and the thread of his story escape him. He stammers, chokes, almost cries. Then he stretches a trembling hand for the mustard-pot and has almost taken a spoonful when Madame recalls him to the path of wisdom. For this escapade he seems in danger of being deprived, almost, of dessert.

These few months have weighed heavily on Madame. She is greatly aged. She is worn out, but still unvanquished. With her dishevelled hempen wig and girlish lace fichu over the silk dress, her plastered cheeks, and her floating raiment, she looks like a scarecrow. But the wind of vanity pulls her together. The maid has recognized me and told Madame that I am there. She sits up with a jerk, stiffens herself, begins to play with the *hors d'œuvre*, and pecks at the olives and the radishes with her poor old teeth. She tries to communicate her factitious alacrity to her illustrious companion, digs him with her elbow, and whispers to him. At first he does not understand. The maid comes to the rescue. He sits with uncomprehending eyes and open mouth. They speak louder and I catch the whisper :

"It's Brousson."

"Brousson ? "

"Yes, Jean Jaques Brousson with his pupils from the Argentine."

Poor dear old lady ! She spits out the last word with inexpressible disgust.

He does not know how to take the surprise. He puts his hands on the tablecloth as if to rise. Flight ? Reconciliation ? Madame holds him back severely, and the maid fills his plate and glass.

"Eat."

He eats in downcast silence, without appetite, by way of occupation, while my little pupils follow the scene with

the cruel curiosity of innocence and keep me abreast of it.

"The old lady is quarrelling with Anatole France. Oh! something's going wrong. They're looking at you. I'm sure it's you they're talking about. Now they're taking coffee. He's drinking camomile."

Having drained her cup, Madame throws down her napkin, rises, and crosses the room. As she passes close to our table, without stopping or turning her head, she throws the word: "Come!" at me, and goes out.

At first, the imperious tone of the order revolted me. What did I owe to a woman who had always been so uncivil towards the little secretary? What had I received from her? Rebukes, gibes, calumnies. The imperious order still rang in my ears when I caught a sharper note in it. It is not only an order, but an appeal, a prayer. This woman of rare distinction, weighed down with years and calamity, cries to me: "Help!" and I must obey.

I follow her under the Master's ironic eye. Haughtily she crosses the little hall with a smile for the girl at the desk in passing, and turns to the staircase. She is sixty, and she leaps up like a girl. Three bounds and she is at the first floor. She pushes open the door of a bedroom, but stands irresolute on the threshold.

"No," she says, "not here. He would come to find us."

With the same ardour she climbs to the second story, listens, senses a traveller's uncertain step, and renews her flight to the very attics where the servants are lodged.

We enter the first room to hand: a room sordid, and filled with an acrid odour aggravated by the sun that beats as into a hot-house through the naked windows. On an imitation marble mantelpiece are a faded bunch

of flowers, pots of pomade, medicine bottles, and an unkempt comb. Pinned to the wallpaper with its little rosebuds, that is coming suspiciously unstuck, is a portrait of Sarah Bernhardt. The buds themselves dance in a neuralgic quadrille of light under the annihilating darts of the sun. Buds, or bugs? Who can say?

Madame is at the end of her strength. The mask falls from her. She lets herself sink upon the bed that has not yet been made.

"No one will look for us here," she sighs.

How far this sad, tired, weeping creature seems from the imperious sovereign of the Avenue Hoche! Tears ravage her painted cheeks. Her poor flaxen head trembles like that of some Eastern image. Fevered veins stand out startlingly from hands grown overthin, laden with rings that click together. She seems at once senile and babyish.

"He has made me ridiculous," she wails. "Ridiculous! Everyone—all Paris—has laughed at him and laughed at me. During his burlesque idyll, kind friends came to my salon to console me. So they said. To console me! Rather to note the marks of despair on my face. In my salon—the salon of which I had made a chapel: Anatole France's chapel. A hundred times I longed to beat the imbeciles and to turn them out of doors. But I was brave: I smiled at them.

"'News of Anatole France, my dears? Of course I have news, the very latest! He is in love, and wants to get married. Being at the Antipodes, he has his head upsidedown—that explains so much! No, he doesn't write to me—a *fiancé* has other things to do! But François writes—my manservant—he went with him to America so as to keep me informed. So interesting, François' letters. I'll read them to you. Naturally



François does not write like France ; but he is punctual, and tells the truth. He describes every 'stopping-place—every stopping-place on Love's voyage.' ”

She breaks into a terrible laugh and buries her false teeth in a tiny lace handkerchief. Then, with a shrinking of the shoulders, she goes on :

“ Love's stopping-places ! Love's stopping-places ! He is past sixty, and has not denied himself either. Everything comes well to his maw. No, he's no fine feeder. And then, he's a sight for pity. He dodders—yes, don't protest, dodders. When people ask for his autograph, he can barely write clearly. Calf-love at his age ! I had a presentiment when he left. If the wench were young and pretty, it wouldn't be so bad. But she must be his own age, or thereabouts.”

Her tone changes from jeers to excuse.

“ But you have been noble. You played a gallant part in this farce. It was you took my side over there. That was all the finer because I have not always been very gracious towards you. I confess it, I was blind. I didn't believe in that Joan of Arc business. I thought the Maid of Orleans was a screen for other maids. Yes, yes. I thought you went on debauches with him and marked down the well-stocked spinneys in the Latin quarter for his hunting. Forgive me ! I was blinded. Then, too, he did everything he could to push me deeper into my error. I misunderstood you. I didn't want you to go on this voyage, and you were the only one on it to behave chivalrously.”

All the barriers are down now. She stops, voiceless, tearless. The heat in the garret is intolerable. To break the cruelty of this brilliant silence, I set out to maintain the chronicler's most commonplace and expedient thesis.

“ Why take tragically this new *Histoire Comique* ?

Anatole France, as you know, places that highest of all his novels. Deformed children are always the favourites. He wanted to have his revenge. Theatrical folk and greenroom gossip have uncommon interest for the great sceptic. Feigned passions seem to him more eloquent than the true. Chance embarked him with a company of actors. Could he live in the players' midst without observing them and playacting with them? This love-affair was the merest comedy-farce, indeed. He played it simply to collect materials for a new book."

"If you have no better consolation to offer me than that——! Don't let's waste our time. We did not come here to talk nonsense. At bottom, you are like me. You feel affection for the man. Yes, still, in spite of what he did to you in Buenos Ayres; for you too were abandoned. But above the man is his work, and that must not be allowed to founder in ridicule. Nothing is so cruel as the arena of literature. Let the gladiator have one moment of weakness and twenty masterpieces are forgotten. Those who applauded are the first to hiss. Anatole France's next book must be spotless, and you can guess how it will be scrutinized. I want to ask you to take up your place again with him. He does you justice now. You always excelled at keeping him in good form and exorcising his boredom. And he has never so much needed to have the pace made for him. Since this disgusting affair, he has fallen into a torpid indifference. Literature, politics, women—nothing, nothing touches him. The spring is broken. He sighs, yawns, sleeps; sleeps, yawns, sighs. He even talks of suicide. In vain I take him to curiosity shops, print-dealers, bookshops. He has become a log, without curiosity or desire. In ten days he doesn't write ten lines."

Madame raises herself from the servant's bed, and her voice becomes more confidential.

"I can't abandon him. He owes me everything. It was I who brought him out of his shell and got him into the Academy. Who knew him, pray, before I taught him to put on his tie properly and to kiss ladies' hands and peel a fruit the right way? He was a miserable little anarchist, the son of a bookseller who lived with his nose in dusty papers. He would be still if I had not extracted him from them."

The metallic tone of her voice grows softer.

"He never told you how much I helped him in his work? Incredible! I have written pages of Anatole France, and really to-day I am not proud of it. I have done a good third of his work. See how I am rewarded! But what matters is no longer the man, but the name."

She becomes pressing, coaxing, and ends up with this illogical conclusion:

"Come back with us this evening! Leave these foreign creatures of yours here. We are going to Capian and mean to work hard there. To work is to forget. What! You can't? You have pledged yourself to them? Surely you won't balance two little South American monkeys against the most celebrated author of modern times! He has behaved towards you with unexampled cruelty and ingratitude. Agreed! But what about me? What do you expect? He is a great man, and great men are not human beings."

After prayers, threats.

"You have been too long together to separate. No one passes, alas! from friendship to indifference. You can only be his friend or his enemy. Choose!"

She rises, imperious and coquettish.

"I must be a dreadful sight."

Before the cracked mirror she opens her bag, powders herself, touches up her face, and sucks her lipstick. Then with brilliant lips and a bitter-sweet smile:

"We leave at five o'clock, dear friend. Have your bags brought here. Be in good time for the motor-car."

So she gives me her hand like a queen and goes purring down the doubtful attic stair.

At five o'clock, I get into the motor-car—but with my two boys from the Argentine. We go to Paris by road and on the way I make my two young pupils read a marvellous book of history with dazzling illustrations: Périgord, the castles on the Loire, and Orléans.

After my cruel, grotesque adventure with the great man, this drive with the children was like a glass of fresh water in the morning after a feverish night.

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#### *BLOWING HOT AND COLD*

E——, who was at to-day's dominical reception at the Villa Said, came back furious:

"There were So-and-so, and X—— and J—— and Z——; and X——, from C—— the publisher, you know, asked him: 'What have you done with young Brousson, who was so much attached to you?' He replied, without blenching: 'I had to get rid of him. He stole my books.'"

E—— couldn't contain himself and rushed out, and came to express his indignation to me. We have long known one another, and shared good and evil fortune. We are more than friends: brothers, and his family and children are my family. He is more upset than if the calumny concerned himself. I calm him down. I know the poor great man's levity. Is he good? Is he bad? Not fundamentally bad. But he is capable, like a child—he, who is almost wholly denuded of imagination—of inventing the most fabulous romance in order to avoid a simple explanation. He will begin by something—any-

thing ; then embroider a vague hypothesis into a twofold definite infamy. And he will be quite astonished when he is told that he has ruined someone's honour.

" I ! But I adore him ! "

He is always in the hold of his theory about vices as the fashioners of gross human clay in creatures of intellect.

Acting on E—— and G——'s advice, I write at once a letter to Anatole France :

" MY DEAR MASTER,

" You said this morning before witnesses that I had stolen books from you. What books ? Did you refer to the first edition of Pascal's *Pensées*, or to that of *Esther*, or etc. etc., "

Here I enumerate all the rare editions, rescued from the shame of the book-boxes on the Embankment and from second-hand shops, and carried in triumph and haste, to lay them with emotion at the Master's feet. I was at an age when the pleasure of giving surpasses by far that of receiving. To make my gifts more supportable, I concealed the prices from him. They were always bargains, marvellous, triumphant bargains, that often meant my going dinnerless to bed !

Second paragraph of the letter :

" But perhaps your visitors misunderstood. You spoke not of books, dear Master, but of manuscripts pilfered. Were you referring to such and such a passage in *Sur la Pierre Blanche* ? Or to such a chapter of *Jeanne d'Arc* ? Or to the theological discussion in *L'Ile des Pingouins* ? To this or that short story ? "

For greater assurance I take the letter myself to the Villa Said. A detail : it is written on paper with the



heading of *Le Matin* on whose staff I have been for some months. I do the reviews in it.

On the morrow comes a pneumatic : " Come to Madame Prouté's this afternoon at — o'clock."

No signature, but I know the hand. I had said in my letter that I would never set foot again in the Villa Said.

Hardly have I opened the door, when he drops the box of engravings he was examining. He clutches me in his arms and drowns me in his river of a beard. His words are veritable tears :

" How cruel ! How could you believe a thing as calumnious for me as for you ! What, you ! You who shared so many days' labour with me, who, knowing me to the core, know how keen is my affection ! Don't you see that someone wants to make us quarrel ? "

The Proutés watch this tender scene in amazement.

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#### ON THE EMBANKMENT

Many times since I have met him prowling about the neighbourhood of the Academy. Though he never enters, he seems to be under a spell cast by the dictionary. He pecks about in bookshops and curiosity shops. He does not grow older, nor decline. He is becoming petrified.

Under his eternal felt hat, which he has not changed since the New World, his eyes look out for ever mocking from a network of decorative wrinkles and crowsfeet. He behaves as if nothing had passed between us—as if we had parted yesterday. He makes me enter into his subject, as into a railway carriage. The theme is rarely contemporary. The pockets of his cape are stuffed with little books, pious or licentious ; the lives of saints,

or salacious tales. As we follow his native Embankment, he tells me of his timid childhood. On the parapet here his father set out the rubbish of libraries, and he sees again the boxes of books at one sou, at two sous, at fifty centimes, and at a franc. And nothing to guard these treasures in cardboard but a child than whom none frailer could have been found, lacking years and courage, and his very nose not reaching the top of the boxes.

How much did he get ? Often the little fellow went off to consort with other young rascals along the river bank, leaving the boxes to be pillaged. Honest folk succumbed to the temptation. Opportunity makes the thief. They carried off a *Lettre à Emilie*, Voltaire's plays, and an *Henriade*.

"You know the *Henriade* ? It's a model of style. I learned to read in the *Henriade*. It was the first book given me by my father, who was a rabid royalist."

"The little fellow was turned out of doors. Out of doors, in a manner of speaking, for he was always out of doors. He used to keep sous to buy pastries, the ruffian, and already showed a leaning towards tastes like those of Tiberius. He must have ended in prison or on the scaffold.

"His successor was a sort of starveling who constantly imbibed as he sat on his stool. One day this extravagant toper asked leave to go and bury a relative. As a sign of mourning, our boxes were shut up that morning. In the evening, on his return, his libations had been so numerous that he set to throwing the books into the river, to see the circles they made. My mother invoked Providence, and my father the police. All that the drunkard would do was to repeat : ' Ah, what fun the funeral was ! What fun ! His widow did it in style ! ' "

*QUI MARIAM ABSOLVISTI*

Why have I followed the funeral of the woman who was my enemy? From curiosity, or from pity, or from impiety?

I walk in the crowd, among the last, after the tradesmen and the sightseers, following a hearse laden with flowers whose petals, scattered along the black road, mark it as with a bright laugh.

Now by the little door of the apse I have slipped into the church of St. Ferdinand des Ternes, in whose aristocratic sanctuary, so suggestive of Chateaubriand, reigns that perverse atmosphere of great Parisian ceremonies, compounded of wet umbrellas, incense, liturgical tapers, furs, naphthalene and musk.

In the nave all Paris is pressed, the Paris of the theatre, politics, and literature. Here are blue-stockings, there actresses with the oxidized tints of beauties risen too early; and men blue of chin with weary beards sunk into otter and astrachan collars, much beribboned with the Legion of Honour and preoccupied by their bald pates. For they have but now uncovered in the chill wind to salute the bier as it passed under the porch—a meritorious rite after a man is the wrong side of fifty. These funeral winds play havoc with sparse locks.

I stay half hidden with the small fry in the passage behind the altar, well placed for seeing and hearing. The choir is ornamented by woodwork surmounted, at the height of a man's head, with epileptic, *craquelé*, stained glass like the sheets of mica in an anthracite stove. And the lead-work is in the same style or, if you prefer, in that of an underground exit. On the workbench—in the stalls, I mean—is a garland of canons. They are part of the holy show. I have never seen them at Madame's, nor did Madame frequent them much. I

can however make out the Abbé M—— who haunted her salon—and her dinner-table. He seems to feel some regret. The organ grumbles out a funeral march as the mutes come up the lane of pews and slip the heavy bier bared of its trappings through an opening under the brilliantly lit catafalque. Their dreadful hands lay hold of wreaths and rare flowers as though they were so many potatoes, cauliflowers and beets.

The family, and among them Monsieur, take their seats on chairs draped in black. Against the folds of the catafalque he looks like a ghost. People point him out.

“That’s him.”

“Oh, how aged he looks! Where has he been living?”

“At Quiberon. After the Stock Exchange copper smash he started a factory for making tincture of iodine.”

This worldly murmur is blown away like moths in a hurricane by the *Kyrie eleison* that breaks with a sound as of shattering glass from youth’s cruel lips.

Suddenly the crowd bunches itself together. A lane is formed, and along it slips Anatole France in his absent-minded ease. He nods. He bows. He holds his crape-bound top-hat up to his eyes like an urn to catch the tears. He advances tripping with the little steps of a child afraid that it may be punished, and as he passes people look at him in astonishment and with fear. The two ladies, my neighbours, have again taken up the thread of their chatter. They know all.

“Have you heard about it? She killed herself for him. Took poison.”

“Not at all. She underwent an operation to remove a growth on her neck. The poor old thing was convinced that that was what prevented him from loving her.”

“I tell you that my version is absolutely exact. She died for him. She could never get over the Argentine

adventure and went on ceaselessly repeating: 'To have been false to me! At his age, and mine! If it had been with some young beauty, I could have forgiven him.' So then she sent for a surgeon. 'Can you remove this?' she said. When you are rich enough, surgeons can remove anything you want—even your life. She made an appointment with the sawbones without telling her son or her husband. They thought the operation had succeeded. She was correcting the proofs of Anatole's last book when she died. The bed was stuffed with them."

"What an upset for him! Put yourself in his place. He had to wire to the husband and the son, see the undertakers, and order all the plumes and mutes and things."

"Well, he's got here in the nick of time. Where will he sit, I wonder? With the family?"

Silently, absently, he makes his way up the church, advancing by little jerks like a billiard-ball gently flipped onwards, seeking a retired seat where he could be lost among the crowd. But they won't make room for him. On the contrary they make way for him to pass, with admiring looks. He cannot escape the place assigned him by public opinion. Now he has reached the row formed by the family where, conquering his shyness, he makes for Monsieur sitting hunched up in his chair and falls upon him. Monsieur gives a furious start, then stretches out his arms; and, behold, they are locked in close embrace, each sharpening an elegiac nose on the other's cheek. Disengaging himself Monsieur offers Anatole France his own seat touching the catafalque, with an antique simplicity that seems to say: "It was you who in her life occupied the place nearest her. Don't desert it now."

M. Bergeret shivers as he crouches against the once beloved body. He bows his head over his top-hat and



under the *Dies Iræ*, the Marseillaise of the Valley of Jehoshaphat, of which the lines strike home, if not to his heart, yet to his learned memory. His wrinkled brow speaks to me ; how often have I not heard his comments at funerals on the hymn of the dead ? He would go, verse by verse, through the dread stanzas, seeming to take a horrid pleasure in them for, if he does not fear hell or eternity, he has an inconceivable terror at the idea of corporeal death.

“ What, this body so beloved, fashioned for joy, must be the prey of worms ? These Galileans have deflowered the world with their Jewish rites. The idea of death was supportable to the Ancients. Eros—Anteros——

“ The corpse was consumed on a pyre of scented wood—A dove flew up, liberated by the flames—The ashes too were blown away by the wind. But the God who was born in a stable gave us the taste for rotting—Hamlet—the dance of death—the grave-digger——”

He is in difficulties with his hat. Also deeply attentive to the gyrations of the beadle's staff that mark the various stages in the ceremony. He rises, bows, kneels, and bends his sceptic head under the choir-boys' tinkling bell, with the utmost docility.

The incantations over, he seems more at ease. He almost leans an elbow on the bier. He draws his spectacles from their shagreen case, harnesses his great nose with them, and proceeds to inventory the paintings on the roof. Is it that he judges these wretched frescoes unworthy of God and of him, or that the idea suddenly occurs to him that this is not a decent moment to study pictures ? Anyway, he puts the spectacles back into their case, and the case into his hat, and crosses his prelate-like hands across his stomach. Is he saying a prayer for the dead ? It is easy to guess its tenor :

“ O God, give peace to this perturbed spirit.”

But now the master of the ceremonies advances to the two men with the vessel of holy water for the absolution.

The two exchange politenesses :

“ Please ! ”

“ I beg you ! ”

This time it is Monsieur who takes first place. He sprinkles the liberating water, with rustic awkwardness. You should see Anatole France's grand style as, following, he handles the vessel. A bishop, at the least, you would say. Now with minute care he makes the sign of the cross over the catafalque and, much relieved, departs to the strains of the funeral march. The bier is extracted again. Once more the flowers are crushed and broken. Everyone makes for the door. General emotion. Much handshaking. Affecting kisses. Embracings in the midst of a strong draught.

Anatole France comes in for a large share of the family condolences.

THE END.

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